

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

ウォルテニア 戦記



Ryota Hori

保利亮太

ILLUST. bob



RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

– Wortenia Senki –

- VOLUME 2 -

**Rozeria Kingdom Civil War
(I)**

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[Hasutsuki]

「馬を使い潰しても構わない。

いいか、絶対に速度を落とすなよ!」

亮真は必死に体勢を保ちながら、
降り注ぐ矢からサーラの体を守ろうとする。

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——すごい自信ね。貴方。

あなた

ルピス・
ローゼリアヌス

ローゼリア王国の近衛騎士団騎士団長。
父である国王の後継者だが、政争に巻き込まれる。

メルティナ・
レクター

ローゼリア王国の家臣で
ルピス王女の側近。

俺が殿下に勝利を
もたらすからですよ。

みこしばりょうま
御子柴亮真

異世界オルトメア帝国に召喚された高校生。
持ち前の戦才を活かし、異世界で覇王を目指す

「亮真様……
そろそろ刻限です」

耳元を擦るサーラの甘い囁きが、
読書に夢中の亮真を現実へと引き戻す。



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HOLY
QWILTANTIA
EMPIRE

O'LTORMEA EMPIRE

KINGDOM OF HELNESGOULA

SOUTHERN KINGDOMS

KINGDOM
OF
XARGODA

KINGDOM
OF
RHOADSERIA

KINGDOM
OF
MYEST

WORTENIA PENINSULA



WORLD MAP of 《RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR》

西方大陸 地図



❏ オルトメア帝国

西方大陸中央部に存在する帝国。覇権主義を掲げ、西方大陸統一に乗り出す。

❏ ローゼリア王国

西方大陸の東部に覇を唱える三国の一つ。豊かな水量を誇るテーベ河のお陰で非常に豊かな穀倉地帯を持つ。西をザルーダ王国に、東をミスト王国に挟まれており、戦乱が絶えない。国政の実権はホドラム將軍とゲルハルト公爵に奪われている。

❏ ザルーダ王国

西にオルトメア帝国と隣接する山岳国家。峻険な山々に囲まれた天然の要害と、豊富に産出される鉄鉱石のお陰で、なんとか帝国の侵略を食い止めている状態。東に隣接するローゼリア王国から輸入される食糧に大きく依存している。

❏ ミスト王国

西でローゼリア王国と隣接する貿易国家。中央大陸とも交易が盛んで、西方大陸最大の貿易都市であるフルザードを支配下に持つ。

❏ エルネスグーラ王国

西方大陸北部を支配する王国。覇権主義を掲げ、中部への侵入を悲願としている。オルトメア帝国とは犬猿の仲。

❏ キルタンティア皇国

西方大陸西部を支配する皇国。オルトメア帝国とは冷戦状態が続く。南部地方への侵攻を画策している。

❏ 南部諸王国

西方大陸南部に群生する小国の総称。西方大陸最大の激戦地帯で、紛争が絶えない。

Chapter 1

The despair of those who are being summoned ①

The 63rd day, after Ryouma was summoned to another world.

The northern part of the western continent.

Three travelers proceeded through the Doshu desert where the yellow sand blew violently.

The three cloaks were stained and scratched slightly, symbolizing the harsh journey they had been through, and their steps were heavy.

“There is an oasis at the end of this sand dune.”

“That fellow over there, right...?”



Ryouma eyes turned toward the sand dune that Laura had pointed out.

His eyes was filled with a mix of sadness and despair and a little desperate hope.

“Let's draw the conclusion. I am sorry; however, it is impossible for you to return to your former world.”

Inside a small crowded room, filled with books and parchment that had turned yellow due to age, the manager of the room said such words while sitting in the chair.

The manager of this room was a lady in her mid-30's to early 40's, who wore hemp clothes.

Her appearance was just, bland, neither beautiful nor ugly. Her eyes and hair was both black, but that was only feature that could characterise her, she was truly bland.

However, they were not visiting her, due to her looks, no the real reason they were there, was because she was one of the people with the most knowledge of magic on the western continent

That is the reason why Ryouma visits her.

The woman was named Anamaria, but she was more commonly known by her nickname, The hermit of Mireish.

“That is because right now there's no spell for it, right?”

Ryouma looking at her with sneering eyes.

They had gotten the same response from every magician with a worthwhile reputation, ever since they fled from Sardina and her pursuit.

However, what she said after that crushed Ryouma.

“No. It's not because there's no spell that you cannot go back. No it's because the spell is flawed that you can't return.”

“What did you say!”

It was a fit of anger that even the sisters who had been traveling together with him for

over sixty days, had never seen.

During these two months, Ryouma and the sisters had been doing guild work while seeking out several renown magicians, in order for them to find a way to return Ryouma to Earth.

Of course, he didn't meet the ones inside the empire, but they would most likely have given him the same answer, as the ones they had visited.

That there's no way for him to return home.

However they had also said, that there had not been developed any spell that could do it, which had made Ryouma ask them if they could create one or not.

Sadly everyone had said, that it was impossible for them to do so, but one name had been given to him, one person who might know how to create something as complex as what he wanted.

Anamaria, The hermit of Mireish...

"Calm down. Nothing will change even if you're getting agitated."

Even when Ryouma showed his anger, Anamaria expression did not change at all.

Apparently she had been a civil officer in the past, but she was forced to give up her job after having a confrontation with a cabinet minister at the place she worked.

"My bad. It's fine. I've calmed down. Can you explain why I can't go back?"

He said those words while trying his hardest to hold back the rage inside his heart.

"The reason is obvious... But before I'm explaining it to you, I want to ask, how far is your understanding regarding magic?"

"Understanding regarding magic huh? "

All the knowledge about magic, which he had gotten from Sara and Laura came to mind.

Magical spells needs energy known as Prana. If one wants to use spells, and depending on how they want to use it, there is three systems.

One is to use the Prana residing within one's body.

As this technique does not require casting, results in it being overwhelming in close combat situations.

Another is incantations.

This magic art is the kind that borrows power from outside sources, such as God, demons, and spirits.

Because of the need to cast, it is not suitable for close combat.

However, since one uses the power of non-human beings, they are able to create a phenomenon that cannot be done by humans, such as manipulating the fire and wind.

And the last one is enchanting, or bestowing magical powers.

This technique uses Prana on a substance that does not have Prana within it, such as swords or spears. This method will raise the strength of a person who does not have Prana within them.

With Ryouma explaining what he knew, Anamaria began smiling.

“That's right. You seems to know about the basic, but now I will ask you a question. Do you know which type is the one that's being used to summon people from a different world?”

Ryouma replied Anamaria's question with annoyance.

“The incarnation type!”

Hearing the answer, Anamaria nodded her head.

“Exactly. Now the problem is, whom are we going to borrow the Prana from in another world?.”

“...What do you mean by that? I was summoned to this world. It was the consequence of this world magic that I was brought here! Don't you just need to pray to the God who has summoned me to this world?”

Ryouma comment was reasonable.

However, Anamaria expression remained the same.

“You can leave this world. I'm sure of this.”

“What's the problem then!”

Yet, the words that Anamaria responded with knocked Ryouma down to the bottom of despair.

“However, you will end up drifting within the interstices of space-time forever.”

Chapter 2

The despair of those who are being summoned ②

“What did you say?”

Anamaria answered Ryouma without even moving an eyebrow.

“I said that you will end up drifting forever in the space between space and time, in other words, you will die.”

“Don't joke with me!”

All the emotions that had been building up inside Ryouma's heart since the time he was summoned finally exploded all at once.

Bang!

Ryouma's fist sank into the wooden desk, and cracks appeared on the desked surface.

Although it seems to be an expensive desk, it didn't matter for Ryouma right now.

“Ryouma-sama!”

“Your hand!”

Laura and her sister who had been silent all this time screamed.

Blood began to drip out from Ryouma's fist after he smashed the desk without holding back.

“Ryouma-sama! Your hand.”

“Shut up! Don't intervene!”

He brushed the sisters off, who were trying to treat his hand, and continued scowling

at Anamaria while ignoring his hand.

“Try saying that again!”

A deep cold hatred dwelled within his eyes and his voice seemed to contain murderous intent.

“Even if you threatened me, the conclusion will not change. In other words, you cannot go back home to the reversed world.

“Reversed World?”

“That's right. The world you've come from. We call it the reversed world. It's the other side of the world where we live.”

After hearing Anamaria further explanation Ryouma regained his calm.

No matter how angry he was, nothing would change.

Thus, listening to all of the explanation had become the top priority.

(So this world and the one I lived on previously is reversed of each other huh? And my world is the reversed one? Well it's the opinion of the people from this world after all...)

It was a pretty common story in his world.

Although the sun gives light equally to all nations, yet Japan as a nation was called the country of the rising sun, and while the Earth is round, China was called the Middle Empire.

When you name something, it was perfectly normal to refer to the side or place one lived on as the proper one, or the more important one.

Anamaria then continues talking.

“However, physically there's nothing defining it as such, there is no back and front. Such naming most likely comes from the fact, that out of all the worlds that exists, including ours, only two have life on them.”

“I don't care which side which! Tell me the reason why I cannot get back!”

Anamaria shrugged her shoulders.

“It's simple. To summon humans from your world to this world, we have to offer Prana to the existing God in this world, to get authorization to summon them. This is because there's a barrier around this world to prevent intrusion from the outside; however, there's also a similar barrier set up on the other world as well.”

“Wait a minute? Enough about the barrier stuff. I was summoned to this world is that not it? Won't it be enough to just ask the God who helped summoned me, in the first place?”

“No. Whether or not you can enter a world, depends on the gods. It's up to them whether they let you in or not. In other words, to enter your world after leaving ours, you have to get permission first from the God who manages the barrier of the world.”

Ryouma head converted the explanation that Anamaria gave into something easier to understand.

(So, it's free to leave? But the problem is getting the permission to enter... Isn't that similar to a self-locking door?)

The auto-lock system which common in a hotel.

It's easy to open the door from the inside, but when the door closes it will automatically lock itself up, and to enter from the outside requires a key.

Replacing the two worlds with hotel rooms, and replacing the space between space-time with the hotel passage made it easier for him.

“In other words, if it's just passing the boundary barrier on this side then it is possible; however, it is not feasible to pass the other worlds. If you tried, the result would be you drifting within space-time...”

“I see, so that's how it is...”

“But, if that is the case, what if we know the God who manages the barrier on my worlds side!?”

Ryouma asked Anamaria, already feeling he knew the answer.

It is not known when the people of this world began summoning, people from your world, however it's certainly something that has been done more than 10 or 20 years.

In other words, there have been summoned thousands of people to this world.

Some of them might have tried to return to their original world, after running away as Ryouma did.

At least, it was a certain thing that Ryouma was not the first person who had tried to return.

Bang!

Anamaria threw a book with dull colours on the cracked desk.

"This is the records of humans from your world, who have tried to return."

The book that Anamaria had offered was as thick as a Japanese dictionary.

"It's not difficult to prepare the summoning ritual. And because you can just change the summoning ritual a little, it's not the problem. The problem is that we have no idea who to offer the Prana to."

Anamaria opened the page of the book and offered it to Ryouma.

"The name of Gods that exist in your world are written here. In other words, this is the names of all the Gods that we have tried to use in the ritual and yet have had no effect."

"That means... Unless I know the name of the God, which has not been mentioned here..."

"You won't be able to return to your previous world."

A heartless declaration pierced Ryouma's chest.

“Tsukiyomi, Susano, Amaterasu, Jehovah, Yahweh...”

Inside the Inn after returning from Mireish, Ryouma shut himself inside his room leaving out Sara and her sister and examined the book desperately.

The face Ryouma made when he returned from Anamaria’s place, could only be described as desperate and terrible sad. It was a sadness that Sara and her sister was unable to describe with words.

The sisters was standing in front, of the room where Ryouma stayed. They had been waiting there for hours.

“It's already been 5 hours...”

Laura nodded her head toward Sara's words. It was already late at night.

“Ryouma-sama...”

The sisters knew how Ryouma felt, now he knew he was unable to return home.

Shivers run through their body just by imagining what they would do if they were in Ryouma's position.

However, the sisters was unable to save Ryouma.

The only thing they could do, was feeling concerned about him, until he was ready to be comforted by them. Until he was ready, they would be standing in front of the door.

Chapter 3

The Despair of Those Who Are Being Summoned ③

The 64th day, after being summoned to another world.

The morning sunlight came through the window.

Laura and her sister were looking at each other and decided to knock on the door to Ryouma's room.

Ton Ton

In their hands they are holding a tray filled with breakfast that they had ordered from the innkeeper.

Ryouma hadn't left his room since last night, having ignored their invitation to have dinner as well as the snacks they had brought last night. The only responds they had gotten from him, was the faint sound of pages being turned that could be heard from inside his room.

Fatigue was clear on the sisters faces, they had been worried about Ryouma, who seemingly was checking the book, as if possessed by something.

Ton Ton

They knocked on the door again, slightly harder this time.

It was not the sisters' intention to disturb what Ryouma has been doing; however, they could not leave Ryouma in his room, when he hadn't had anything to eat since last night's dinner, nor had gotten anything to drink.

"Ryouma-sama...?"

They called his name fearfully.

As expected, there's no answer from him, only the sounds of pages being turned could faintly be heard.

Finally, the sound stopped.

“Sara...”

“Indeed... I guess there's no other choice.”

After they looked at each other, they placed the tray that they held in their hands, on the floor and turned their body toward the wooden door.

BANG!

Their body strengthened by training for years, easily blew the door off.

““Ryouma-sama”“

The room was dark.

Despite the fact that sunlight was entering from the window, the room still remained entirely dark.

“Ryouma-sama...?”

Cautiously, Sara tried to call him.

Ryouma who sat inside the room, hadn't reacted when he sisters forced the door open, he just stared at the desk in silence.

Due to him opened the pages of the book over and over again, the tip of the pages ended up looking worn out, and some part of the pages were wet due to sweat dripping on them.

Numerous papers were scattered on the desk and the floor, on each of them were names written in small letters in order to have as much space to write on.

(This is... Did he write all the god's names he remembered down, in order to check if they were listed in the book or not...)

Even with only a brief look, Sara could see more than a dozen of papers scattered around the room.

"Sister..."

Laura handed over two pieces of paper to Sara.

The papers was tightly filled with names with horizontal lines crosses over each of them.

And when she looked closely, the names written on were identically the same.

"This is..."

Toward Sara's murmur, Laura nodded her head.

Ryouma wrote all the names of the Gods he could remember and checked whether it was written in the book or not, and then crossed them out if the name existed in the book.

And then, when everything he had written was crossed out, he repeated the whole thing, in case there was a mistake, or he missed one of the names.

Looking for hope that does not exist... He repeated his works again and again.

"...None..."

A small voice comes out from Ryouma's mouth.

"Ryouma-sama?"

"I... Can't return home..."

This time, his voice could be heard clearly by the sisters.

“I can't return... I can't return... I can't return...”

The words that come out from Ryouma's mouth gradually grew stronger.

With the room being dark, the atmosphere turned gloom.

“Sister!”

“Yes!”

The moment the sisters entered the room, they felt something uncomfortable.

In the sisters' eyes, the image of Ryouma is someone powerful, calm, ruthless, but also kind.

However, the Ryouma in front of them now, was fragile and unstable.

The two sisters immediately embraced Ryouma's head between their chest.

Just like how one would comfort a baby.

“It's alright. Ryouma-sama. We're both here. We will always by your side...”

A long time passed before the dark and heavy air that drifted inside the room was gone. A calm breathing from a sleeping person, came from Ryouma that was between the sister's chest's.

“Sister. Should we carry him to bed?”

Laura turned her eyes toward Ryouma when asking.

“I guess so... Laura, try to carry that side.”

Even though Ryouma have a huge body exceeding 100 kg, the two sisters somehow managed to lay Ryouma on the bed.

“From now on, what are we going to do?”

Laura line of sight turned toward the broken door.

“I think he won't be able to wake up until evening due to the fatigue from the all-nighter. We should talk to the innkeeper about the door and pay extra money...”

Then Sara began talking in a hesitant manner.

“Ryouma-sama can be quite scary...”

“Indeed, however, that does not matter... Ryouma-sama saved us. That's why we belong to Ryouma-sama. We should devote ourselves to Ryouma-sama.”

“Un, I agree. Sister.”

After the sisters had exchanged their conversation, they turned their gaze toward their master who has been sleeping on the bed.

(Where is this?)

Ryouma's consciousness was inside pitch darkness.

A cold, dark space, which felt like it could freeze ones heart.

(I... That's right!. I was inside my room examining the book.)

Little by little Ryouma's consciousness becomes clear.

“This place is within your mind.”



A cold robotic voice without emotion could be heard.

(My mind? Am I inside my consciousness?)

“That's right.”

(But I did not say anything?)

“This is inside your own mind after all. Something like spoken words is insignificant.”

(But you're talking you know?)

“No, you are only thinking that I am talking as it makes more sense to you.”

(What are you?)

“Me? Me huh? I'm someone close to you, an existence that understands you the most.”

(tell me!)

“For now, you are good knowing just this much... One day, you will reach the answer yourself.”

After the voice said such word, it's asked Ryouma a question.

“What is your wish?”

Ryouma thought for a moment about his strongest wish.

(I... I want to return home. I want to see, Asuka, Grandfather, and my classmates... I want to go back to my original world.)

“But that will not come true. Did you not confirm it yourself?”

The heartless voice smashed Ryouma's wish.

(I can't come back? Can't I go back to that life once again?)

“You can't. Although the possibility itself is not 0. However, are you prepared to pay a great sacrifice? There's no other method other than clinging to your own luck. You should have understood this... Later, will you have the resolution to make a great sacrifice? Or will you end up giving up?”

(Hah? What are you talking about?)

Toward Ryouma's question, the voice continue talking,

“You should understand everything already... It's just that you don't want to admit the answer.”

(I... I'm...)

“If you unleash your rage, you can even destroy this world. Forced into this world, to this world to fight for them. All of this, whose fault do you think it is?”

(That is... the old man and the people in that empire's fault...)

“Wrong... They are only part of the problem! The world is at fault. This twisted world which is filled with sacrifices made by the people from your world.”

The voice denied Ryouma's answer.

(This twisted world?)

“That's right! This world was established with the premise of taking away! Kill... Violate... Taking and robbing what one would want. You have the right to do that!”

(I have such right?)

When Ryouma was about to nod his head toward the voice, another voice resounded within the darkness.

“It's alright. Ryouma-sama. We're both here. We will always be by your side”

It was a warm, soft and comforting voice.

When he heard that, Ryouma lost his consciousness and disappeared from the world of darkness.

“Fumu... You're leaving without freeing me huh?... Well, that's fine. Sooner or later, even if you don't want to, you will have to choose. Either to be accompanied by me or be swallowed by me... No matter what it's your choice to decide, after all... I'm you...”

In the darkness where Ryouma had gone, only the cold robotic voice could be heard.

Chapter 4

The despair of those who are being summoned ④

The 64th day, after being summoned to another world.

“U... unn...”

Ryouma woke up on the bed when the sky began turning dark.

“Uh... *Yawn*”

Ryoma let out a big yawn.

The first thing that Ryouma noticed was the broken door.

The door was completely broken, and the light from the corridor shined into the room.

Next, he began pondering about where he was, somehow he ended up in the bed.

Pun

A delicious fragrance stimulated his appetite, the smell of stew drifted through broken door frame.

It seems that meals are being served in the cafeteria downstairs.

The broken door, and how he ended up on the bed, there was quite a few things he had questions about, however he was unable to win against his hunger, so he quickly got up, and went downstairs.

“Oh! Did you finally wake up!?”

The innkeeper greeted Ryouma.

The innkeeper raised his head, and greeted Ryouma. Apparently, he was doing the

books.

“Ah, yes I am finally up, thank you, and good evening...”

Except at the time he checked in, the inn’s owner is rarely talked to Ryouma.

“The repair cost has already been paid by the girls that you came with, so you don't have to worry.”

Ryouma answered the innkeeper with a puzzled expression.

“Ah... I see, so you're not aware huh? If that's the case, then you should ask those girls for the details. After all, they broke the door down for your sake.”

“Haa...”

Ryouma who still could not grasp the situation can only answer ambiguously.

“Well, other than that, you don't have to worry about anything, since you've reimbursed the damage. Do you want to move to another room tonight? I will move all of your baggage if you want to.”

It seemed to him that he had no choice other than to move to another room.

After all, although he felt sorry for the inconvenience, he can't sleep with a broken door.

“I understand.”

“Ah right, you have not eaten since last night, right? Since my wife just finished making a stew, go bring some to your room.”

And then he called his wife in the kitchen.

“Yes yes! You don't have to shout that loud!”

The wife comes out from the kitchen while bringing a tray in her hands.

It seems like she had prepared everything while listening to their conversation.

“Here!”

The tray got handed over to Ryouma, and the scent of tasty stew together with freshly baked bread greatly stimulated his appetite.

However, Ryouma felt confused, because there was three portions worth of food on the tray.

Who was the other two servings for?

Doga

Suddenly Ryouma's right shin get kicked.

“What are you waiting for? Go and bring the young ladies their share!”

He has a body that is 190cm tall, and he weights over 100kg.

It's not a body that usually gets kicked by anyone, let alone by a woman on the shin, so he was quite surprised by the kick,

“You! Have you thought for a moment how you'd troubled those girls huh? You big oaf!”

It seems that she didn't like Ryouma expression.

“I don't know what you've been up to. Not eating any dinner, nor eating anything we offered late in the night... If you don't want to eat, then that's your problem! However, because you didn't eat, those girls didn't eat anything! They refused to eat by themselves you know!”

“Eh? They have not yet eaten?”

The complexion on Ryouma's face changed.

“Haa. This is why men are such... UGH! You listen closely now! It's about time for those girls to wake up! Go take this tray and eat together with them!”

She returns back toward her kitchen while heaving a big sigh and shaking her head.

“Well, that’s what it means not being alone. I don't know what you're worried about, but if you ponder about it too much, you might just lose one of the precious people in your life.”

After saying that, the inn owner clapped Ryouma's shoulder and returned to the account book once again.

(I'm...)

The words of the married couple stuck within Ryouma's mind.

Ryouma remembered that he has been traveling solely for the purpose of returning home to Earth; however, it was that moment that he recognized just how supporting Sara and Laura had been all the time.

(It seems like I'm not paying attention to those around me...)

For Ryouma, this world was nothing but pain, having been forcibly summoned, he didn’t think he would find anything to care about. Rather he hated everything, especially the people.

However, Ryouma had been supported by human beings of this world which he supposedly hates.

And not just the sisters, there was also the lady in the restaurant at the capital, and the receptionist at the guild that helped him out.

They had taught Ryouma various things that he would never had figured out by himself.

Relationships between people are important, after all, a person can’t live by themselves. And no matter how much, Ryouma hated the world, that was a truth he

could not deny.

KonKonKon

“Yes. Please enter...”

Ryouma entered the room of the two sisters.

That day, the meals Ryouma ate together with the sisters, was the most delicious food he had eaten since coming to this world.

Chapter 5

Compulsory Quest ①

Day 83 after being summoned to the new world.

The three who had left the town of Mireish and came to a port town called Fulzad in the eastern country.

From the books borrowed from Anamaria, Ryouma knew that the possibility for him to be able to return to the former world was near zero, so he stopped pursuing the means of returning home, and instead started thinking about living in this world.

The sisters dedicated affection played a significant role in changing his mind.

However, even if he said that he would live in this world, he had no purpose.

So for the time being Ryouma decided to travel around while earning money from the quests he received from the guild.

A journey to find out what his purpose would be in this new world.

“From now on, what are we going to do?”

The three of them were talking in front of the guild inside Fulzad town. They had come down from the town of Mireish by passing through the forest without going through the highway.

Due to that, they manage to collect a considerable amount of raw material.

Although they had been careful and only chosen to collect the materials with the highest price, the weight easily exceeded 40kg.

It was an amount which was barely okay to carry, not talking about fighting.

They had spent 20 days travelling, and due to that their swords had turned into mere iron bars, therefor they decide to dispose of them and buy a new one in Fulzad.

“Big sister should go to the guild. After reporting the quests completion, she can make a preliminary investigation on which quest we should take next. As for us, we will organize the luggage, buy some consumable goods, and sell the raw materials at the magical item store.”

The amount of raw material they got from the monsters after they left Mireish town was quite considerable.

It would be impossible for Laura alone to handle it, even with both the sisters it would be quite hard.

Thus there's no other choice for Ryouma to carry them.

(Well. I guess this is appropriate.)

“Well, I suppose that's about right... Laura. Just check if there some good quest, then come to the magical item store. Let's decide which quest to take after getting new equipment and after we have had lunch.”

They registered as a party before leaving Mireish town, they did so because it saved time and effort compared to reporting each and every quest alone.

“Understood. Well then, See you later.”

After bowing her head, Laura went inside the guild building.

“Now then. Let's convert all of these things into money quickly.”

Like that, Ryouma began walking carrying the bag filled with things such as horn and skins.



“Yes. Triple G rank. Laura Marfisto, yes? Indeed we have confirmed the quests completion. Thank you very much.”

The receptionist said such things to Laura while handing over her card and the rewards.

The number of monsters that they had subdued for the past 20 days was quite considerable.

Since all the target monsters are ranked below than them, they wouldn't gain any achievement clearing point.

(Should we level up to F rank soon?)

Laura pondered about it however Ryouma didn't seem to have any interest in raising his rank.

Although Laura personally believed that Ryouma's ability was equal to at least rank D or perhaps even C rank.

While she was thinking about Ryouma, a man tried to strike up a conversation.

"Hou... It seems like you've subdued a considerable amount huh?"

The man has been struggling with a bunch of document behind the receptionist, but he immediately stood up from his seat and walking towards Laura.

An educated guess would put him at around 30 years old.

He had blonde hair which gave him a kind and gentle feeling.

And since he dressed appropriately, it would seem that he had a fairly good position within the guild.

"Laura Marfisto right? Member of Mikoshiba Ryouma's party together with Sara Marfisto, am I wrong?"

The man talked to Laura with a gentle tone.

"That's right but... Who are you?"

"Oh, I'm sorry for the late introduction. I'm Wallace Heinkell. I'm the guild master of this town."

The meeting with this guy would be the catalyst that opened a new purpose for Ryouma.





“A forced quest?”

Ryouma asked Laura while eating the meat using a fork.

The time currently was around 13.00 o'clock.

Because it was no longer lunch hours, there was a lot of vacant seat at the place Ryouma and the sisters had their lunch.

After selling the raw material at the magic item shop, he grouped back up with Sara in front of the store.

Then they meet up with Laura and listened to her story in a restaurant located diagonally from the magical store.

“Yes. It seems to be something like that.”

Laura nodded her head toward Ryouma's words.

“Forced quests huh... It was a system where the guild master and some other senior executives nominate specific mercenaries or adventurers to forcibly accept a quest, right?”

Ryouma continue while shaking his head.

“However, that should only apply to the high-ranking mercenaries and adventurers. At least that was the case from the guide book that I read.”

“But isn't that strange? We're a triple G rank and yet getting nominated? Aren't triple G rank a low rank?”

Sara questioned while tilted her head.

“About that, I was told that they would give us an explanation regarding the circumstances if we go to the guild at 14.00 o'clock.”

Laura herself didn't seem to be that enthusiastic. After all, they were being forced to work for unknown people, for unknown reasons.

And the same was also true for Sara who looks like not enthusiastic about it.

Forced quest usually were quest that no one wanted to take it, and it was also usually an urgent quest.

If it was not urgent, there's no problem even if it was being left alone until someone takes it.

And if no one wanted to take it, it usually meant that there would be significant danger involved with it.

From start to finish, it didn't sound like good work, not one of them was especially positive.

Ryouma thought about it for a bit before asking Laura.

"Then wouldn't it be better for us to simply ignore it?"

"If possible I would like to do so... However, there's a slight chance that they will terminate our guild registration if we do so..."

"Are we being threatened?"

"They don't say so, not explicitly; however, I could feel it from what they said"

Listening to Laura, Ryouma looked at the sky, mentally weighing the advantages and disadvantages against each other.

(I don't like being threatened. And furthermore, can guild master exercise their authority that far? Sure they have such rights, but it should be impossible to terminate the registration when we haven't given any reason for it.)

A person who forces things upon others, just because they have authority was one of the things that disgusted Ryouma the most, as he cherished personal freedom.

On the other hand, however, there's also an advantage to it.

(Currently, the guild is the only one that can guarantee my social status in this world. As for gold, the gold we have taken from the slave trader has been left untouched, but I need money. The monsters we usually hunt earns us plenty for now, however they say, that if you have money, you can buy something like a proper social status.

But, no, I can't possibly do that, since I have no acquaintances to buy from. Sooner or later I might have to leave the guild, however, for now, the status of adventurer still has its use. Even if I have to shut my eyes toward their slight unreasonableness, I should remain in the guild for now huh?...)

In the end, it's all about, if the advantages or disadvantages weighed more, in the long run.

Laura and her sister would follow Ryouma decision.

After some time, and various thoughts, Ryouma finally said,

“I guess, we should go there for now... After listening to their story, if it sounds disadvantageous, then I will think about it again.”

The sisters nodded toward Ryouma decision.

Chapter 6

Compulsory Quest ②

Day 90 after being summoned to the new world.

Swuz

An arrow shot from behind Ryouma grazed his left ear and pierced the coaching box.

“Ryouma-sama!”

“Silent! Just focus on controlling the horse, Sara!”

Ryouma shouted at Sara who saw blood dripping from his left ear and told her to concentrate on controlling the carriage.

For Ryouma who have never ridden a horse or driven a carriage, the way to escape was making Sara take control of the carriage.

Ryouma didn't have time to worry about his body.

Arrows kept piercing the carriage, making it look like a hedgehog.

Originally Ryouma should have been in the passenger seat, enjoying himself under the carriages canopy, but right now, that was not the case.

Because the arrows that were shot one after another, pierced onto the coach, and especially the coach driver who was without any protection.

Ryouma who is unable to drive the carriage, focused on protecting Sara, and he did so by stripping the window planks, and using them to shield her, so she could concentrate controlling the carriage.

“Damn it! They still chasing after us!”

“Ryouma-sama. As expected, against this...”

「馬を使い潰しても構わない。

いいか、絶対に速度を落とすなよ！」

亮真は必死に体勢を保ちながら、
降り注ぐ矢からサーラの体を守ろうとする。

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

ウォルテニア 戦記

Sora bitterly cut Sara's words.

“Wallace that bastard... No, this is not the time for this... Sara! Laura and the others should be laying low somewhere. Listen alright! Don't miss the sign!”

“Yes!”

Ryouma while desperately striking back the arrows that came raining down on them, thought back to the time, when they were at the camping ground seven days ago.



Seven day ago, inside the forest located northwest of the port town Fulzad.

Under the pretense of a forced quest, Ryouma had become a bodyguard for a group of merchants heading toward one of the three Eastern countries, the Rozeria Kingdom.

The Rozeria Kingdom exists in between the Zalda Kingdom which is referred to as the Iron Kingdom, and the ocean trade nation which Fulzad was part of, that was known as the Mist Kingdom.

The majority of the Rozeria kingdom's territory was open fields, and the main industry were agricultural products and dairy products.

Because Ryouma and the others were being told that they would get extra rewards and some mercenaries would tag along, they decide to undertake the quest, although they thought it was suspicious from the beginning.

First there was the carriage with a canopy that was assigned to Ryouma, despite the fact that he should be just a security guard for some merchants.

Usually mercenaries or adventurers can't get on the carriages.

Next despite being merchants a lot of the carriages were empty.

However, if they said that the goods had been sold out, it would usually make sense, but considering the route they had followed after leaving Fulzad, they should have been able to restock as many commodities as they would have wanted for future trading.

And when considering the efficiency of doing business like that, having an empty

carriage would usually never happen.

Another thing that they felt were suspicious was the merchant Ryouma was assigned, and especially his appearance. His body was rather slim, and he had very rough hands.

Ryouma thought back to the one eyed commander Rolf, when he shook the merchants hand, and couldn't help but tilting his head.

Currently, the mercenaries that had accepted the quest, guarding the merchants were having a discussion while surrounding the bonfire.

"I was worried a bit too... At least, I've never seen such merchants as these."

The one who answered Ryouma's worry was Lione, the leader of the mercenary group called Red Lion.

She was a tall woman at least 180cm tall, with tanned skin.

She had clear and defined muscles, and large breast which made sure to anyone who might be wondering, that she was indeed a woman.

Her red hair was hanging around the shoulders, and matched surprisingly well with her golden eyes.

Ryouma would guess her age to be around 30, as she had the charm of a mature woman.

"Me as well, despite having been a mercenary for a long time, and having done protection jobs for merchants for a long time, this is the first time I worked with anyone like them..."

He is the adjutant of Lione, a fellow mercenary with the name Bolts.

A man around in his mid-fifties, and whose major characteristic was that he had lost his left arm.

He seems to have lost his arm during battle, but by the time Ryouma meet him he didn't seem to be bothered by it.

Because of what Bolts said, who had more experience being a mercenary then anyone

else, everyone else got even more on edge, there were clearly something wrong the merchants.

“You... What do you think?”

Lione asked Ryouma.

“Honestly, I regret to undertake this quest...”

Lione and Bolts nodded their heads when they heard Ryouma declaration.

“I gave in due to the reward being good, but I wonder if it was a mistake...”

“But this is a quest from the guild. Aren't you just being worried too much?”

Listening to Lione's words, a mercenary who Ryouma didn't know the name of, spoke.

“You stupid... I wasn't able to become mercenary if I didn't have a feel for danger, and knew how to handle crises!”

“Wha! Even if it's Lione-san, you don't have to say it like that!”

Lione just shook her head towards the enraged man while smirk appeared on Bolts' mouth.

“You. Although you're close to be B rank, that boy over there has clearly beaten you in terms of judgment.”

The line of sight of the other mercenaries immediately turns toward Ryouma.

“In the first place, the reason why I gathered everyone here is because of the suggestion of the boy over there.”

“Hee! To be ordered around by such youngster like him, to think that Lione of the Red Lion, was a pushover! Oi!”

Ryouma was the youngest among them all here.

Although he is 16 years old, his face made people think he was at least in his late 20's. And most of the people around him thought of him as a peer, even though they were around their 30's to 40's.

Naturally, the mercenary who had been disrespectful got beaten up by Lione personal.

"Haa!? With what mouth are you spouting that nonsense huh?!"

Such a calm tone of voice. However, Ryouma feels the voice of the person was like the calm before the storm.

And the surrounding mercenaries also felt it.

The other mercenaries quickly stopped making fun of Lione, immediately shutting their mouths.

"Well, I can understand you guys feeling. It's not like everything is clear to me either, for now, let's end it here."

The air around them loosened after Bolts said such words.

Lione also does not seems to disagree either.

"Well for now, I guess this is bad..."

Bolts and Ryouma nodded their head together toward Lione's words.

"It seems like only idiots have gathered..."

"But still, it can't be helped for them to complain, what do you think, Bolts? After all, we can't do anything other than be prepared for the worst."

Lione then turned her eyes toward Ryouma.

"Boy. What are you going to do?"

"Well, for now, there's no other choice than continue doing what we are doing. Since we can't discard the quest just because we are feeling suspicious."

“I guess so... But still... Regarding there's something behind this quest, what do you think?”

Ryouma responded to Lione's words while deeply sighed.

“Well, for me, it feels like they are luring us into something... As if something is going on under the table, but I guess we can only wait and see if my suspicion is correct”

Chapter 7

Compulsory Quest ③

Ryouma knew it.

That there's something unnatural about this quest.

However, the only one he was able to get support from are only Lione and her mercenaries group.

Seven days have passed since the time the mercenaries had a meeting around the bonfire.

Since then, there are no unwanted visitors such as monsters or thief came.

If nothing were to happen, that in itself is a good thing.

Although there was a discord between Ryouma and the other mercenaries except for Lione and her group during the meeting, but something like that can be considered as a trivial thing.

But he knew.

When everything is this calm, usually a storm is about to strike.

Like thus, seven days had passed since they left the port town of Fulzad.

And Ryouma prediction was proven right.

Hyu

The sounds of an arrow cutting the wind.

It happens within the forest area near the border of Rozaria Kingdom.

Suddenly arrows are being shot one after another from the forest on the right and left sides of the highway.

“““What's going on!”““

““It's an ambush!”“

The mercenaries raising their voice one after another, however, one merchant rebuked them

“Everyone calm down!. Don't break the formation! “

A warning is being issued one after another by the mercenaries who are guarding the carriages.

There are around ten carriages in total.

The one who drives the carriages are the merchants themselves.

While the mercenaries for the sake of strengthening their guard ride horses.

In a situation where surprise attack happen.

Even if they are mercenaries, it is normal for them to feel agitated, after all, they had been taken by surprise.

However, in that situation, Ryouma stared hard at the merchant who gives command calmly toward the surrounding.

“Calm down!. Hide from the arrow! You can use board plank or cloaks; anything is fine. You can also hold up your hand covering your head to defend from the arrow even if its just a little!”

It was a command that can be said as appropriates.

If it can be done, even if it's only to escape from this hell a little then do it.

“Ryouma-sama!”

“Yes... Finally, it has come.”

In contrast of the surrounding mercenaries, Ryouma's tone of voice did not show any agitation.

Ryouma had predicted that someone would attack them.

The problem is,

He does not know when, where, and what kind of attack will happen.

“Listen alright? Sara. From here on out is a battle for survival, understand?”

“Yes. I understand... Onee-sama and the others...”

Ryouma nodded his head toward Sara's words.

“It's fine. Lione-san and her mercenaries group are reliable people... On the other side, how many skilled people are on this side, but, I guess as I've expected huh!”

Ryouma flicked away an arrow that heading toward him using the spear in his hand.

It was evident that the carriage he was riding receive much more intense arrows attack more than the surrounding place.

In a short time, the carriage Ryouma was riding on turn into something that looked like a hedgehog.

This means their attack aim have been arranged beforehand.

On the driver seat, Ryouma and Sara desperately trying to protect the horses pulling their carriage from the arrows.

“I know it was suspicious, but, I guess as I expected huh. Our problem now is... to find out who behind all of this...)

The most possible candidate for this is Ortomea Empire.

Three months has passed since the case with Sardina.

With that, it was not strange if some action will happen soon.

However, Ryouma stopped his train of thought up until here.

(How stupid am I... Right now, our priority is to survive from this place. I can search for the person behind all of this slowly and carefully later.)

Finally, the rain of arrows has stopped.

Just one minute has passed.

In the meantime, seven mercenaries have been struck by arrows and died.

As there is 30 mercenaries guard, roughly a quarter of them has died by the surprise attack.

And most of the horses which pulling the carriages are dead due to the rain of arrows.

Only the horses pulling the carriage which Ryouma was in survive.

Ryouma immediately divert his line of sight toward the surrounding.

The carriage which Ryouma was riding is located in the middle.

In other words, it was in a position which he finds it hard to escape either from the front or the back.

“Sara! Can we move away!?”

Toward Ryouma question, Sara grips the reins and looking toward the front.

“It's impossible! The carriages at the front have blocked the highway!”

One might wonder if it was because of the surprise attack that the mercenaries have become disordered.

The carriages in front of them have blocked the highway in a way that no space left to let them pass.

Their position are as if making sure that Ryouma and the others were unable to escape.

Ryouma looked behind and clicked his tongue.

The highway behind him has been blocked in the same way.

“Boy!”

Lione and her mercenaries group come toward Ryouma.

Because of his prediction, none of her subordinates receive any fatal injury.

Everyone get off with just a slight wounds.

And everyone who ends up dying are the one who does not take Ryouma prediction seriously.

Until here, a battle cry can be heard from behind.

“It's come huh...”

After being restricted by the arrow, another force attacked from behind.

Such plan is actually not bad.

“Boy!”

Vexation floats on Lione's face.

“Lione-san. As we planned.”

Toward Ryouma's words, Lione nodded her head lightly and faced her adjutant on her side.

“Understood. You! Blow the carriages in front of him to make way for a retreat!”

Contrary to the other mercenaries who raises an angry voice, Lione instructs the mercenary near her calmly.

“Ane-san... Are you serious? Are we going to abandon the merchants?”

Lione turned her cold eyes toward the mercenary who rebuke her.

“Shut up and stop complaining! If you don't want to die here, then do it!”

“A-Ane-san...”

“I'm not trying to convince you! But if you want to survive, obey me!”

Toward Lione's aggressive attitude the mercenaries began to shut their mouth.

This is a battle between professional ethics and the instinct to survive.

“Ane-san! Some merchants still on the carriages! What are we gonna do?”

A different mercenary asked Lione.

It seems like he was hesitating to blow up the carriages in front because of some merchants still inside.

According to Ryouma prediction, the merchants should have escaped during the surprise attack.

(What's going on? Aren't they the enemies accomplice?... No, wait. On the contrary, they are not running away because they are accomplice huh...)

Lione was asking what to do with her gaze.

For Ryouma, there's only one conclusion.

Ryouma nodded his head lightly.

“Don't mind them and blow them away!”

“U-Understood!”

The mercenary who comes back to ask instruction from Lione goes back to his original place with his face filled with fear.

A few moment later.

“BOOM!”

One of the carriages that blocked the highway exploded and flew to the side magnificently.

“Ane-san, it's done!”

“Everyone listen! If you want to survive, run without turning back!!!”

After giving her order to the other mercenaries, Lione turns her eyes toward Ryouma.

“Up until here, it was as predicted by you eh, Boy?”

“I only thought about the possibility that might happen. By the way, the things after this, I can leave it to you right?”

Ryouma's eyes shine coldly.

“O-Of course. It's alright. Your important doll and Bolts from our side should be able to prepare everything smoothly.”

Lione said those words after being overpowered by Ryouma's icy glare.

“If that is the case then good. I've explained the plan to Laura sufficiently. Because she's a smart girl, she won't make a mistake. Next is... the problem on our back huh...”

“I know. You've warned us enough.”

Alright. Lione-san, please be careful.”

Lione kicked her horse and moved forward.

“Ryouma-sama! We as well!”

The sounds of sword fighting from behind the carriages began to disappear.

All the mercenaries on the back seem to have been cleaned by the raiders.

“Here we go!”

Toward Ryouma's words, Sara nodded her head and whipped the horse to make it move.

An empty highway can be seen on the front.

Lione and the other who had gone first riding a horse can run to the limit until their destination, however, Ryouma is different.

Although two horses pulled it, the speed of the horse-drawn carriage will be inevitably slower due to the heavy passenger part.

Of course, although they can leave the passenger part behind, Ryouma didn't choose that.

The reason for that is due to the possibility to attack back the assailant.

Which need Ryouma to maintain moderate distance to lead the assailant to the destination spot.



Ryouma's face can feel the strong winds.

It was very difficult for him defending Sara from the rain of arrows.

Some arrow slipped pass through Ryouma's defense and pierced the driver box, some part of Sara's clothes began to be dyed red due to the blood from her body.

Some blood also started to dye Ryouma's clothes who also got his ear grazed by arrow sometime ago.

“Not yet huh!?”

An impatient voice can be heard from Ryouma who's in the middle deflecting arrows.

“It's already about time... AH! There it is! I saw it.”

Something fluttered in the middle of the highway.

Within Sara's vision, a flag of red lion and black background fluttering about.

The distance is around 500 meters.

"Alright! We manage to do this one way or another. You understand right; this is a crucial time."

"I understand."

After she had said those words, Sara loosened her hold on the reins and cut the speed down little by little.

From behind several man riding on horses entered Ryouma's vision.

'Alright... This is good. Cut down our speed a little more... The other side seems to have slowed down their speed too huh... great...'

The figure of men riding on horses pulling a bow clearly appeared within Ryouma's vision.

"Get them!!"

When Ryouma's carriage passes the spear that being stuck in the middle of the highway, he grasped his spears and raised it high.

Gushaa!

A sound something being cuts up can be heard from behind.

At the same time, the sounds of horses running from behind also disappear.

Ryouma then got off from the carriage and began walking back toward the stone pillars that suddenly appear.

Naturally, Sara also follows him from behind.

"It seems like everything gone as planned eh..."

Toward Sara's words, Ryouma nodded his head lightly.

Ryouma was not yet convinced that everything is a success.

Because he believes that if he let his guards down, misfortune will befall him.

Mercenaries such as Leone, Bolts and the others sprang out from the forest and began walking toward Ryouma.

Their number is ten people.

They walked toward the stone pillars that appeared in the middle of the road.

“Confirm whether or not there's someone who escapes the range of the magic art!”

Under Lione command, the other mercenaries spread out in a group of two.

“Ah... It seems like someone is escaping, isn't it? If that is the case, you can follow the trail of blood into the forest.”

The pursuers that had their body getting pierced by the stone pillars groaned after listening to the mercenaries.

After Bolts had confirmed with Ryouma, he lifted his right hand lightly, and then several of the mercenaries who saw the signal immediately go into the forest.

“Young master. What are we going to do now?”

Ryouma shows a surprised expression after hearing the way Bolts call him.

“What do you mean by a young master?”

“Well... Well! You can say it is the way I respected someone.”

Apparently, it seems the result of his strategy has improved his image within Bolts mind.

Ryouma shows a bitter smile while saying nothing.

“Well then boy, What are we going to do after this?”

Lione who finished ordering the other mercenaries asks Ryouma.

On the other hand, it seems like there's no change in the way she called him.

Although for Ryouma, either way, is fine...

“Well, for now, we should gather some information. We should be able to get some since there's a lot of them who survive.”

Cold icy expression appears on Ryouma's face.

It was a cold smiling expression that enough to make a veteran fighter such as Bolts and Lione to feel the chill.

Sara and Laura who saw Ryouma expression began to pray to God.

Because these girls know, what kind of miserable end these assailants will have.

Chapter 8

Compulsory Quest ④

Mikhail Banashu was being put in the place while being restricted by a rope.

There's was a red-haired woman, an elderly man who had lost his left hand and a big man in at least his mid-20's with two girls following behind him as if they were his shadow.

Mikhail's heart beat got faster, rising to unknown heights.

After all, the girl who was his target, the girl he was sent to assassinate was right in front of him.

Three hours had passed since he was caught in the trap set by Ryouma and the others.

Among all of the attackers, who got struck by the magic that summoned the stone pillars, only a few of them came out of the attack live.

They were only given minimum care to stop their bleeding, and afterwards, they got thrown into the carriage while restricted by ropes.

And after riding the carriage for a short while, the assailants were taken out, one by one, with the final one being Mikhail.

“You're the one who commanded the surprise attack, am I right Banashu-san?”

Mikhail could only nod to answer the question from the man with a large build.

The tone of voice of the man was not coercive; instead, it was polite and calm.

However, speaking in such a calm and polite way felt ominous to Mikhail as it came from one of the men they had tried to kill earlier.

It would be better if he was being interrogated by someone who would get red face and getting angry.

“I've roughly heard the circumstance from your subordinates. Well, I guess you guys are people who are in a bit of a disagreement...”

Mikhail just kept silent, although he felt uncomfortable from what the man had said. After all, among the chivalric code, there is a clear guide detailing how to deal with captured enemies, after all, it was an iron rule in war, not to give the enemy information.

“Ah... You don't have to be that cautious. Because the chances are rather low, that you will end up accompanying us.”

For Mikhail, the words the man spoke, sounded like the devil's whispers...

“You're going to kill us?”

“Not necessarily... For the moment, I don't really see why you need to die.”

The man declared as such and shrugged his shoulders. But Mikhail noticed the phrasing... it meant, that if he deemed it to be necessary, they would get killed.

“But that sentiment, it was mutual for the both of us no?”

Mikhail was unable to find room for argument.

Mikhail himself never liked to kill someone, in fact as long as he had a choice he would pretty much always choose not to kill anyone.

However as a commanding officer in Rozeria Kingdom's royal guard, for the country's sake and for the princess' sake. If it was deemed necessary, then he had to dye his hands red with blood.

Usually, being part of an assassination attempt was something that his knightly honour was unable to bear. However, he was convinced that there was no other way to stop the other faction's ambition.

And the man seemed like he was able to read how Mikhail felt.

“Well. I don't know what you think but, from the start, you have never seen us as your

enemies.”

A bewildered expression appeared on Mikhail's face after hearing what the man said.

“What's going on? Aren't you people from the noble faction?”

‘That's it. That is the problem. Well, for now, we will try and confirm what we think, Mikhail-san. After that, you will get your questions answered.”

After saying that, the man walked around and stood behind Mikhail's back, and placed two fingers on his neck.

“...What are you going to do?”

“Oh, this is something like a good luck charm. Please don't hesitate to answer the question comfortably.”

Without waiting for a reply from Mikhail, the man winked at the blond girl.

When the girl saw the sign, she nodded and stepped forward in front of Mikhail.

“Then I will ask you a couple of question. Is it true that you are part of Rozeria Kingdom royal guard?”“

“

“Do the reason why you've attacked the merchants' group, have anything to do with the conflict that's currently happening about the inheritance of Rozeria's throne?”

“

“Did you plan this surprise attack, to protect the princess?”

“

“You belong to the Knight faction, and your opponents are the noble faction?”

“

“The King died suddenly not long ago, and the first princess should have succeeded him as the successor, however, the noble group intervened and stopped her from

doing that, am I right?"

"....."

"As for the noble, they support another princess, an illegitimate child, as the successor, is that not it?"

"....."

Mikhail desperately tried to ignore the question that the girl asked.

Not even once, did Mikhail's utter a word of affirmation or denial.

"This is... what are we going to do?"

The girl asks the man.

"It seems like he's the type of a person that will be hard to get an answer from. Well, that's not really a surprise though..."

Looking at the man face, he didn't seem to think of it as a problem.

"Laura... Come forward..."

A silver-haired girl came forward after being told to do so by the man, she stood in front of Mikhail, next to the other girl.

And after the girl had come forward, the first girl asked Mikhail the last question, which made Mikhail heartbeat go wild.

"Last question... Is she the one that you aimed to kill?"



When listening to Sara's question, Ryouma's fingertips could feel Mikhail heartbeat go rampant.

"It was right huh."



Ryouma shows a dissatisfied expression.

And most of the people near them showed similar expressions.

The truth is something that does not necessarily have to be conveyed through one's words.

Someone who firmly tries to stay quite like Mikhail, sometimes shows the truth more clearly, then one that wraps it up with eloquent words.

Because he was trying desperately to steel his facial expression, people around him had an easy time reading Mikhail's heart.

Even without Ryouma's affirmation, Lione and the other had already grasped what was inside Mikhail's heart.

"I see.now... Damn Wallace, that bastard... we've been deceived huh..."

Words of resentment come out from Lione's mouth.

Thanks to Ryouma, there had been no deaths within her mercenaries group; however, there was some who had gotten injured.

They had received those injuries from the surprise attack that Mikhail had lead.

That was the damage they received even though they knew of the possibility of an attack, due to Ryouma's prediction. Had Ryouma not told them about it, or had Lione not taken Ryouma's prediction seriously, the injuries might very well have changed to deaths. In fact, their group might have ceased to exist.

It was now obvious that the guild master was involved in this, which naturally caused the trust they had in Wallace the guild master, as well as the guild itself, to drop drastically, being replaced by hatred.

"Well, with this, it was clear that Wallace has deceived us."

Toward Ryouma's words, all the people in that place except for Mikhail nodded their head.

“Now then... the problem is the future. What are we going to do...”

“How about reporting this to one of the other guilds?”

Bolts suggested that after hearing what Ryouma had said.

“No, I think that would be bad. We're sure that Wallace has deceived us, but, we have no proof. If you carelessly appeal to the other guild master without any evidence, we might lose everything instead.”

Toward Lione who refute Bolts suggestion, Ryouma nodded his head.

Bolts himself personally did not think that optimistic and didn't seem to believe in his own opinion.

“Well, I've thought of a way. However... it would be quite a hard thing to do, see?”

“You bastard, what are you guys blabbering about!?”

Listening Ryouma and the others talking, Mikhail was left in confusion.

All should have been settled if he had been able to kill the girl with silver hair standing in front of him.

At least, all the knight who participates in this raid knows about this.

It was about three months ago, after the demise of the previous king, that a report was brought to the first princess who's in the middle of preparing the succession to the throne.

It can be said that this was an event which causes surprise for all in the Knight faction.

Another daughter of the previous king suddenly appears in a neighbouring nation, the Mist Kingdom, with a claim to the throne.

An illegitimate child is by no means rare.

Especially in the ruling class, where successors are necessary.

In order to secure the next generation, they usually make a lot of children so that the families don't die out.

Aside from a nobleman's wife, there were usually also one or more mistresses.

There were also times when they played around with commoners.

And as a result of spreading out their love, illegitimate children were born.

In itself, it should not be a problem.

However this time, the king had left a child who suddenly announced their candidacy for the throne at the moment when power vacuum happens after the king's death which made everything very chaotic.

When the report was brought to the kingdom's royal capital, everyone didn't believe such a stupid story, and dismissed it.

However, the rumour that they had thought would disappear in an instant, instead of spreading throughout the kingdom, gradually making the rumour true.

And for the Knights faction, an event suddenly happened that made it real.

The noble faction leader, Duke Gerhardt, declared to the public, that he would be adopting this illegitimate child, and at the same time, he raised the matters about the former king's will.

Everyone within the Knight faction doubted this, and believed it to be some kind of fabrication.

However, the kingdom ended up divided in two.

And the authenticity of the will that the noble had raised ended up losing its value, as the nation had already been divided.

Originally Princess Lupis was the leader of the royal guard; thus she had a close relationship with them.

However, on the other hand, she didn't have much contact with the nobles who dominated the kingdom's domestic affairs. Due to not having much involvement in the kingdom's internal affairs, the nobles rallied around Duke Gerhardt as the leader of

their faction, and declared support for the illegitimate child.

Making the balance of power to be skewed towards the noble faction, the balance of power was roughly said to be 2 /10 in favour of the knight's faction, 3/10 in favor of the nobles, while 5/10's of the country's power was neutral at the moment, and currently leading to a confrontation.

A knight faction is a group of soldiers, making them very powerful on the battlefield; however, they are entirely unsuitable for politics; thus they were struggling to win the neutral faction.

On the contrary, the nobles are far weaker in term of fighting power; however, they held more political power compared the Knight faction, leading to the present condition where the neutral faction started to move toward the nobles faction.

And in that situation, good news arrived at the Knight faction.

The information was that the illegitimate child was planning to enter Rozeria Kingdom by route of the Mist Kingdom.

It seems like the noble faction planned to raise an army as soon as she entered Gerhard's territory.

Knowing this information, the knight faction sneered at the nobles indiscretion.

They believed that everything would be settled if they killed the child who was important for the noble agenda during the journey toward Rozeria Kingdom.

The neutral party would once again change their stance if the illegitimate child got killed. And the nobles would lose their candidate.

Thus the assassination was to be carried out based on the information they had about her.

"Hmm? Even if you ask us that..."

Everyone except Mikhail nodded their head.

"Well, to say it plainly, you've been deceived, you know? By the noble faction..."

Hearing Ryouma's words, Mikhail's brain froze.

Originally he was not a bright man even though he had a decent position in the military.

“I-It can't be... You can't deceive me!”

“Even if you say that...”

Hearing Mikhail denial, Ryouma shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, first please calm down. I will try to explain it.”

When he said so, Ryouma makes Laura stand in front of Mikhail.

“Well then, I will say this clearly. She's not the illegitimate child that you're looking for.”

“Lies!”

Mikhail shouting was loud enough to wake up a sleeping bear.

“Well, the reason why you thought that Laura was the illegitimate child is because of her silvery hair, right?”

“That's right! A teenage girl with silver hair!”

Mikhail raises his voice.

As if shaking off the doubt that began to appear within his mind.

“Well, certainly Laura is a teenage girl with silver hair... but, let me ask you. Did you determine that she was the illegitimate child based on that alone?”

Mikhail thought about Ryouma's question.

(Silver hair should be relatively rare. And if we include the age criteria then...)

“That's right! That alone is enough!”

Listening to Mikhail answer, Ryouma showed an amazed facial expression.

“...You guys are very stupid, aren't you?... If it's a silver-haired girl, then there would be countless of them within this continent.”

“The one who's stupid is you! The one who we're searching for is not just a mere silver-haired teenage girl, but someone who tried to enter Rozeria Kingdom around this time via Fulzad! There won't be many people who meet such condition!”

A smile appears on Mikhail's face.

(That's right... There's no way a silver haired girl passed this place by accident. I don't know what they are scheming for but, I'm not going to get tricked!)

“Indeed, the probability of someone like that passing this place would be dramatically low. However, it does not mean it was impossible you know?”

Toward Mikhail who feels convinced with his own belief, Ryouma looked at him amazed while also feels pity.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well for example, what if they made someone unrelated to all of this, travel some remote path, perhaps due to a quest... and at the same time leaked false information to the Knight faction. Naturally, the knight's attention would be drawn toward it, and meanwhile, during that period, they would move the real illegitimate child by another route... How is it? It's not that hard to do that, don't you agree?”

Mikhail confident face immediately froze.

“I-Impossible...”

“From the beginning, it was strange that the knight faction, was able to get information on the noble faction...”

All the people in that place turned their gaze toward Ryouma.

“The illegitimate child is supposedly the only trump card that the noble faction has. Honestly, to move someone like that into the country, they would, without a doubt, plan everything minutely with the collective effort of the entire noble faction. And above all, they should also pay attention to the information getting leaked. Yet, it was leaked to the Knight faction.”

Ryouma then gaze toward the surrounding.

He tries to confirm if everyone understands what he was saying.

“So, they leak it on purpose huh? boy”

Ryouma nodded toward Lione's words.

“Well, that highly possible if you think about it, and after that, the noble faction then asks Wallace who is on their side if he had anyone that met the criteria of being a teenage girl with silver hair.”

“That was the reason we're being chosen.”

Toward Sara's words, Laura presented a question.

“However, Wallace is a guild master. Will someone take that kind of risk easily like that?”

Indeed, neutrality is the guild principle.

And you won't be able to manage a guild or the like unless you have trust just like how customer trust merchants contract.

Looking from this point of view, one can say that Wallace action is remarkably inappropriate.

Because they were being used as a “bait” while doing a quest guarding the merchants.

Is there any possibility that Wallace might not have known about this?

That is what Laura wanted to ask.

“The chance for that is low. The reason for that is because we were forced to take the quest.”

Ryouma then continue explaining.

“I've also asked Lione-san, she said that usually compulsory quests are issued only to the high-ranking mercenaries or adventurers, and apparently, due to the urgent nature of this quest, it would usually only be given to people who was ranked B or above.”

Lione nodded her head after receiving the sisters' gaze.

“In other words, there's no basis for us to be given this quest. However, when it comes to a silver-haired teenage girl who works as mercenaries or adventurer, there was only the triple G ranked Laura. Additionally, by forcing us to take the quest, being so low ranked, would increase the odds of us dying due to the surprise attack. And if by any chance we survived the ordeal, the soldiers from the noble faction who disguised themselves as merchants should be able to take us out. And with that, the truth will disappear into the darkness...”

Toward Ryouma's explanation practically all the people in that place agree with him.

The reason was that the merchant's carriage was empty.

The rough hands and the surprisingly good physique that the merchant had could be explained by them in fact being soldiers.

Ryouma group being the only one that was given a carriage with canopy was to make the knights think that the illegitimate child was inside the carriage.

At the time they received the surprise attack, the reason why the road got blocked was to make sure that Ryouma and the girl got killed by the Knight faction.

So far, all the unnatural circumstance up until now could be explained that way.

“...If that is the truth then... That guy had deceived us?... No... But looking at this...”

Listening to Ryouma's reasoning, Mikhail leaked words of regret and lamentation from his mouth.

The person he refers as 'that guy' must be the one who had delivered the information to the Knight faction.

Ryouma then proposed something toward Mikhail who was sitting crushed with grief, and regrets.

“Even if you are lamenting here, nothing will change, you know? “

Mikhail directed his gaze up and saw Ryouma's face.

His gaze filled with questions.

“Well, we are pretty much the same as you guys who are in a dilemma due to having been deceived by the noble faction, we're also in a troubled situation.”

By the end of the day, their quest was to guard a merchants group.

Even if all of that is just a lie, from the point of view of the guild's record, it was the truth.

Which was why they had big problems.

Although it was for the sake to survive, Ryouma in fact attacked the merchant's carriage.

In addition, he also escaped abandoning the merchants.

So if the guild only looked on the surface, Ryouma was someone who abandoned his escorting mission, let the merchants who he was supposed to guard die, and last of all ran away by himself.

And to make matters worse, if Wallace were to cover up the knight faction who attacked them as a mere thief, Ryouma and the others would be branded as traitors who abandoned their mission. The repercussions would at minimum be, that they had to pay huge penalty, but they might also be unable to take new quest because the guild wouldn't trust them, meaning they wouldn't be able to earn. And right now, Ryouma

and the others didn't have any ways to counter that. After all, everything Ryouma said was nothing more than circumstantial evidence.

Even if they asked Mikhail to be a witness, there's the possibility of him not being honest.

After all, if what they did, it will just become a stain on the Knight faction's honour.

Moreover, the one who will judge the situation would be the guild master, Wallace. To make a plea that they had been deceived to the person who actually deceived them, that would not make any sense.

Until here, everyone should know their present situation.

Lione and her group did not change their facial expression.

Therefore they entrust Ryouma with the decision.

Trusting Ryouma's wit to find a solution.

"With that being the case, how about it? Mikhail-san. How about we join hands as allies?"

Those words that Ryouma uttered would end up changing the fates of the Knight faction greatly.

Chapter 9

Audience ①

Day 96th after being summoned to the new world.

“This is Rozeria Kingdom’s royal capital, Piraeus.”

Listening Mikhail's words, Ryouma opened his eyes wide and turned his line of sight toward the front.

“Hee... That is the royal capital huh?... It's pretty huge...”

“That is natural. After all, this is the royal capital of Rozeria Kingdom which can be regarded as one of the great nations within the western continent's eastern part! In the first place, Rozeria Kingdom is...”

Ryouma observed the royal capital that began to appear in the distance while smiling wryly due to Mikhail explaining the kingdom's history filled with pride due to his strong sense of nationalism.

“First of all, it was good that we could safely arrive here. After all, we expected the noble faction to have planned ambushes along the way...”

Mikhail who was feeling relieved, said those words, and Ryouma who heard them showed a smiling face.

“Indeed, the possibility was there after all. Maybe because we found out about their disguises, they began to feel cautious when it’s come to the matter of pursuing us...”

“Are they going to give up just like that...?”

Ryouma answered him with an expression as if asking him 'dissatisfied?', which in turn make Mikhail's expression became stiff.

Although they had just been acquaintances for six days, Ryouma had already grasped Mikhail militaristic character.

He got an unpleasant feeling finding out the enemy had given up on pursuing them just like that.

He didn't like hard jobs nor did he enjoy failures, he hated when he had to redo everything from the beginning.

If one had to say, it was in his nature, to not stop doing something, until it was finished, and he was the winner...

"Well, everything depends on who takes the command. They might have chosen someone who gives up and prioritised safety after their plan had failed."

"A military man is someone, who when they fail at something, will stand up, stronger and more determined than before, and conquer what they previously had difficulty with, or do you disagree?"

Mikhail's words were filled with a sense of belief in strength and bravery.

However, Ryouma's didn't value such beliefs very highly.

"Not all knight put the same value in honour and pride like Mikhail-san, don't you agree? "

Listening to Ryouma's astonished tone of voice, Mikhail's face turned red.

"Are you making fun of Knight's pride!?"

"Those words are something a person who had attempted assassination shouldn't say, no? "

Hearing that words, Mikhail's face became stiff again.

Because that was the words, he doesn't want to hear the most right now.

"Gununununu... T-That was... Something that it couldn't be helped..."

Barely able to say that much, Mikhail moved towards the back where the injured people was sitting and receive potions from Laura.

No matter how much he sugarcoated his words, he knew it wouldn't change the fact, that he was planning an assassination.

Even though he understood that, Mikhail still felt worried.

Mikhail was wondering what he should prioritise, his knightly pride or the national crisis.

“Funn... Although I think there's no point for him to lament about such thing, after all, I never thought what he was doing was wrong.”

Sara heard Ryouma speak, while he was watching Mikhail's back, who was regretting what he had done... Sara then asked a question. ‘

“It was not wrong? “

“Hmm? Well yes... there's nothing wrong with planning an assassination. Had I been in the same position as him, I might have chosen to take the same action after all.”

An assassination is something that can not be said as something admirable.

However, Ryouma thought that if it could save many lives by just killing one person, and the possibility of suppressing a civil war that would surely ravage the land, such choice should not be excluded from the other options due to something as silly as an honour.

“In the end, an assassination is always just one among the many choices that existed. Where you hope that your choice will help you achieve your goals.”

For example, the knight faction's goal is not to let the illegitimate princess from the noble faction become the Queen.

And when thinking the efficiency of doing things, choosing to assassinate the illegitimate princess would certainly cause, the least amount of damage compared to engage the noble faction in a bloody civil war.

However, going down that route, required them having obtained the proper information.

And that was why Ryouma thought the knight's actions was idiotic.

It was foolish of the Knight's faction not to have confirmed the information before setting their assassination plot into action.

The reason why the assassination didn't go as planned, might have been due to them hesitating.

"Well, looking at Mikhail, it seems like the knight faction is filled with muscle heads."

"Muscle-heads? What is that?"

At the end of Ryouma's explanation, Sara heard words that she does not know the meaning of it.

"Ah... In other words, it's those people whose only focus are getting stronger and prioritise the use of force, which means that when they are doing anything that requires brain activity, they mess up."

"Ah... I see. So that's muscle head..."

In these past six days he had been acted together with Sara but, to suddenly understand each other behaviour and speech is still rather hard.

Indeed looking at Mikhail subordinate that survived, whether because they are straightforward people or whatnot they seemed to be people that lacked in the brain department.



That day, Ryouma's proposal causes a great stir within Mikhail's heart, which all things considered was natural.

After all, no one would think that right after being enemies; he would suddenly propose them becoming allies.

Furthermore, many of Mikhail's subordinates had been killed by Ryouma's scheme.

At the time when Mikhail was starting the assassination plan, he had 50 people under him. And now, among them, only five had survived.

Including Mikhail, six people survived.

Naturally, their hatred is strong.

And yet, Mikhail decided to accept Ryouma's proposal.

No, opposite to that, it's more like he had no other choice other than to accept.

Even if he had refused Ryouma's proposal, Mikhail didn't have any other alternatives.

Not only had his assassination attempt failed, but he also lost many of his men.

Even if they excuse it, by saying it for the sake of supplementing their forces, and it was definitely a plus for the knight faction to become allies with Ryouma and the mercenaries.

However, even if Mikhail himself was convinced with that, his subordinates weren't as understanding.

Even when they were being set free from the ropes, they prepared themselves to go up against Ryouma once again, even though that meant ignoring their bleeding wounds.

In the end, they accepted Mikhail's words; however, the flame of hatred still flickering within their eyes.

It could even be seen when they looked at Sara who tried to change their bandages for them.

"Well, Bolts-san's bamboo rock magic is quite powerful after all." *<TLN: The skill name of the rock pillars magic from the previous chapter.>*

Ryouma muttered those words while watching Mikhail's back who is currently helping to nurse the injured people.

"Indeed. As expected of a veteran mercenary. To think that he was able to cast magic arts with such wide range."

"When I heard it at first, I was wondering what was going to happen."

“It's good that everything went smoothly, yes?”

“Indeed. After all, it would be bad to annihilate everyone, but demanding to decrease the opponent drastically while leaving one or two survive is in itself was quite unreasonable... So in actuality, Bolts-san did quite a good job.”

In order to grasp the situation, Ryouma absolutely needed survivors.

In other words, he didn't want to kill all of them, just because they had attacked.

Of course, the means of achieving that is limited.

“Ou! Did you call me? Young master.”

Bolts who heard his name being mentioned moved his horse closer to the carriage.

“Oh no. We're just saying that thanks to Bolts-san's performance, we were able to survive somehow.”

As he heard Ryouma's words, a smile appeared on Bolts' face.

“If young master said that then I'm happy, however, the reason for all of us to survive this time is entirely due to young master, you know? My magic art is something trivial.”

After saying those words, Bolts moved his horse away from the carriage once again.

One might wonder if he said that because he felt embarrassed.

After he confirmed, that his name had not been called, he immediately returned to his original position.

“But then, what are we going to do from now on?”

Laura suddenly called out from his side.

“What's wrong? You surprise me. Is the medical treatment for the injured people finished already?”

“Yes. Mikhail-san is helping after all. More than I do...”

Hearing Ryouma's question, Laura's face gets cloudy.

Although it was for the sake of wound treatment, Laura still felt a considerable criticism from their gaze.

To summarise what Laura had said, it's more like 'It is better for Mikhail to do it rather than me who they see as their enemy'.

“It's fine... Also, how is the condition of the bunch from the [Red Lion] ”

“For the most part, they only have slight injuries, so they should all recover quickly and completely... More importantly, Ryouma-sama's injuries are heavier, you know?!”

Well even if she said that his wounds were heavy, all it was just scratches from the arrows raining down upon them, but due to the blood from all the minor scratches he got, resulted in him being all bloody, which make him looking heavily injured.

In actuality, after he cleaned his wounds, it's was just a matter of him waiting for the scraps to disappear.

After listening to Laura's words, a smile appears on Ryouma's face.

“That's good then... Since the worst case scenario, we might have to fight again soon, after all.”

The sisters' face tightened due to Ryouma's words.

“Will the audience fail?”

Ryouma nodded toward Sara's words.

“Well, there's that possibility.”

Actually, Ryouma is betting on this proposal.

In Ryouma's eyes, it didn't really matter much whether the Knight faction or the Noble

faction ended up controlling the country.

However, getting rolled up into political strife against his will, he has no choice but to support one side.

After all, if he didn't support one side, then there was the possibility that Wallace might push all the blame and responsibility onto Ryouma, and then sent an assassin from the guild to kill him.

Right now the possibility for that to happen is quite high.

And currently, Ryouma didn't have any means to counter such things.

After all, the person that forced him into this mess to begin with was the very same person who would be the judge if they wanted to claim that they were wronged, which is Wallace the guild master himself.

They had thought about taking the issue to one of the other guild masters... but they deemed it to be quite dangerous to do that.

One may be wondered who the guild masters would believe, Ryouma and Lione on one side, being adventurers and mercenaries or one of their colleagues, Wallace.

Also, it was quite likely that the guild masters simply won't concern themselves with this case, as it didn't directly affect them.

And even if Ryouma ended up talking with one of the other guild masters, there was a very good chance that they would simply think that Ryouma was trying to make excuses for failing and abandoning his quest.

In other words, Ryouma's only choice in regards to dealing with the problem was to first get someone influential to back him, all in order for them to judge him fairly.

And currently, the Knight faction was the only option Ryouma had when selecting who to be his backers

Whether they were a mere bystander or an influential person in some country, there would be no merit for them to help Ryouma.

Thus the only one that could actually offer him support was the Knight faction.

In exchange for that, Ryouma would help them with their fights against the noble factions.

However, that was just something Ryouma and the other conveniently thought.

After all, there was no reason for the Knight faction to help Ryouma and the others.

In fact, many of their comrades had been killed by Ryouma, and if they were a bunch of muscle heads, they might just try to cut his heads off without listening to their words.

That's why it was a bet.

A gamble that depended on whether or not the leader of the Knight faction was a reasonable person with a cool head.

As well as, that person being able to see the value of having Ryouma and the others on their side.

The carriages finally arrived in front of the castle gate.

“Now then... What happen after this, depends on my speech.”

Ryouma muttered those words while looking at the castle from the castle gate.

This will be the third time he will play a game of life and death since the time he came to this world.

From his eyes, a strong willpower can be seen.

Chapter 10

Audience ②

“Her royal highness first princess Lupis of the Rozeria Kingdom will be present shortly! Lower your head!”

With the red carpet being spread a woman entered the audience room, and announced that the princess was about to appear.

Ryouma decided to mimic Mikhail who bowed his head with one knee on the floor.

After all, he was a human that came from a world where royalty was regarded and viewed as something obsolete.

Thus he doesn't know how to show proper respect toward the nobility.

Imitating what Mikhail was doing, was the best he could do.

Since Lione was as confused as Ryouma, doing something like this didn't seem natural to her, while on the other hand, the Marfisto sisters, although they were slaves until the other day, they used to be lesser nobility, and was performing splendidly.

(Maybe I should ask Laura and Sara to teach me about it later?)

Ryouma waited patiently for the princess to enter while looking at Laura and her sister who bowed gracefully.

Then the audience with the princess began.

The room which Mikhail guided them to was a long room with a golden throne inside.

A red carpet was lined up from the entrance of the room to the throne, with a total of 20 soldiers on both sides of it.

For Ryouma and the others, this was quite a dangerous situation, since they were only four people.

(Well... I guess there's no other choice huh. It was already great that she was willing to meet us in the first place. Although it would have been perfect if she had been willing to meet with me in secret...)

After entering the castle, Ryouma and the others were put into a room for several hours by Mikhail.

Logically it was kind of natural, after all, they were people whom the princess and the Knights faction had acknowledged as enemies not long ago.

Ryouma didn't know what kind of report Mikhail had made, because when Mikhail came back, he told them to follow him to the throne room immediately.

Thinking Mikhail's report could have resulted in them being arrested, for an immediate execution without even being able to meet the princess, however, since the princess have granted them an audience, at least, now they had been given a chance to talk, considering that, one can safely say this is a good omen.

While his head was lowered and he was looking down, the sound of a door being opened from behind the throne could be heard.

Then several footsteps were heard within the audience room.

It must be the Princess Lupis and her close aide's footsteps.

Ryouma and the others kept waiting for Princess Lupis to speak while bowing their head.

"Raise your heads."

The voice of a dignified woman could be heard.

Before Ryouma's eyes appeared a young woman with silver hair wearing a body armor that was completely white.

"Vice leader of the royal guard, Mikhail."

The first words from Princess Lupis were directed toward Mikhail.

Her face looked both dignified and calm.

(Vice leader? Seriously? That guy, did he actually have such a high position? No wonder the princess granted us an audience. But still, isn't that guy too impulsive for the job?)

Ryouma, now knowing that Mikhail was actually closer to the princess and the leader of the Knights faction, thanked all the Gods he could remember, for his good luck.

"I've heard the report from Meltina. I have to say that you being unable to fulfill your mission is very regrettable. And a large number of knight have lost their lives due to this failure... All of them have lost their lives is a blow to our faction and jeopardizes the future of our kingdom. Despite being the leader, you've survived and is now present in front of my eyes. As the princess, I must make you compensate for this failure with your life!..."

The room's atmosphere turned cold due to Princess' words.

However, on the princess' face, a subtle smile could be seen.

"However, you're a good knight, and your loyalty to the royal family can't be questioned. It would be a big loss if I were to lose you now when our country faces a crisis. In accordance with your past achievement, and considering that this mission was a trap set by the noble faction, I will extend your punishment until the political strife against the noble faction has come to an end. If your future actions in the conflict have enough merits, I will pardon your failures."

A clamor immediately dominated the audience room.

Was her decision outside everyone expectation? Even Mikhail showed a blank expression.

"Your highness princess, is this alright?"

A woman who came in before, asked such a question.

"It's fine... There's nothing more stupid than punishing capable people during a national crisis. Besides I just extend his execution time and might pardon him, however, I've never stated that he was innocent of his crime."

Hearing Princess Lupis words, the clamor within the audience room began to subside.

Mikhail then bowed his head while expressing his sincere gratitude toward the princess' leniency.

“Certainly, I will meet your highness expectation without fail!”



(I see, so that's how it is... I respect her judgment. After all, she doesn't want to weaken her faction more than it already is intentionally... Furthermore, she just extended the time until his punishment rather than proclaim him as innocent. This also means, if Mikhail doesn't achieve any achievement in the future, it will be the end for him... Uhuh, Not bad at all... Not simply being lenient, but she's also able to make a correct judgment by looking at the current situation.)

If she simply spares Mikhail's life, the bereaved families of those people who participated in the surprise attack under his command won't be able to consent.

While that might be true, however, pushing all the responsibility to one person when all of the top leaders have fallen to the enemy trick is in itself a problem.

Thus, choosing a compromise where she will offset the failure with future achievement can be said to be a politically right decision.

(Not bad at all... No, rather, I might have been lucky... If it's like this, she might be able to understand my proposal properly... It's just... there's a problem.)

Ryouma saw the reaction of the people around them when Princess Lupis made her decision regarding Mikhail's future.

And there he noticed, a vexed expression from an elderly man standing, one step lower than princess Lupis. Apparently, he didn't agree with her decision to spare Mikhail's life.

Of course, it wasn't obvious to everyone else, as the expression only appeared for a split second.

(This guy, I guess we can't just simply call all this, as a mere dispute between the three factions huh?...)

Whether Mikhail is a competent person or not, there's someone who actually wished for his death, despite being from the same faction.

Usually, no one wishes their colleague or friends to die. But if someone wishes for their colleagues or friends deaths, then that's means...

(That means, not all of the people from Knight faction, is loyal to Princess Lupis? No,

if I consider everything, with that in mind then, this all begins to make sense... If that the case then, I might be able to find an opening when I try to curry favor to the princess.)

Ryouma frantically tried not to laugh, after all, the information he desperately needed, actually convenient appeared in front of him, all by itself.

Ryouma had to compel himself, because if he showed a smiling expression now in this place, it might end up being fatal for him.

(Not yet... I need to be patient... I've not yet passed the predicament. The game has just begun... I might end up dead if I were getting doubted by the princess or that woman...)

Ryouma line of sight turned toward the woman who previously asked a question to the princess.

She's had a large build for a woman with black hair.

In addition to that, the two swords on her waist look to be quite used.

Furthermore, she must have earned princess Lupis trust, after all, even after being questioned, Princess Lupis didn't show a dissatisfied expression.

“Mikhail's judgment ends here. Now then, let's move to other subjects.”

Saying that princess Lupis gaze immediately turned toward the four people, that bowed down, one of them being Ryouma.

“I see. There's indeed a teenage girl with silver hair... Are you really not the illegitimate child of the previous Rozeria's king, King Farst the second)

Princess Lupis immediately asked the biggest problematic issue.

“No, my name is Laura. Laura Marfisto. The elder sister of Sara Marfisto that's also present here.”

Sara nodded her head hearing Laura's answer.

"I see... Looking closely, you both indeed look similar. If not for the hair color, you would be like two peas in a pod.)

Her gaze is focused on the sisters.

Certainly, since they are twins, everything except their hair color was similar.

"Your highness... There's no information that the illegitimate child have a sister."

The black haired woman talked to the Princess quietly.

"Marfisto, I'm familiar with that family name... If I'm not wrong, it was a family name of a Knight house from the central continent, is it not?"

"Yes. If I'm not mistaken, it should be a considerably famous family name... and their skin color and features are indeed from the central continent too..."

They both looked intensely at Laura and her sister.

For a moment, their line of sight intertwined with each other.

"I see now... Indeed, they certainly different from what we know about the illegitimate child based on the information about her that we received the other day."

Princess Lupis muttered those words as if giving up on something.

That is natural.

If by any chance Laura was the illegitimate child of the previous king, King Farst the second, then the reason for the civil war could be removed, and the conflict could be resolved just by killing her.

"With that being the case, it seems like I won't be able to condemn any of you for retaliating against my knight."

Princess Lupis muttered those words as if she was in trouble.

“I beg your pardon. To receive your highness tolerant words, I'm unable to express anything other than feeling gratitude.”

Ryouma graciously lowered his head when saying those words.

Actually, Ryouma and the others are the victims who got rolled up in this mess; thus He wanted to be a bit more aggressive.

However, if he has to think about the future, it would be not thoughtful of him if he took a heavy-handed attitude when it wasn't necessary.

Looking at Ryouma's admirable attitude, a smile appeared on the princess' face.

“I'm not that stiff after all. In fact, we're the one who troubled you people... Is there anything you want?”

Ryouma pretended to be lost in thought for a while after hearing Princess Lupis words.

While in fact, Ryouma had already decided on the answer.

“I won't ask of anything your highness; however, by all means, I hope your Highness would give our suggestion some thoughts as your highness assistance would be greatly appreciated.”

Ryouma said that, with a tone indicating he was in deep regret.

“Is this about the suggestion you had proposed to Mikhail?”

“Yes. That is correct.”

Listening to Ryouma's words, princess Lupis showed a troubled expression.

If one looked at it from her viewpoint, it would be better for her to no longer concern herself with Ryouma here.

If possible, she wanted to just give them some money, and get rid of them from this place quickly. After all, Ryouma and the others were the reason for all the men they had lost in the operation. Making them literally one of the Knight's factions enemies.

“...That is something I can't give a final answer right away... You understand why, right?”

Princess Lupis looked at Ryouma.

In other words, Princess Lupis didn't mind joining forces; however, it would only gather dissatisfaction from her subordinate if they joined forces just like that, not to mention, Ryouma had said in his proposal to Mikhail that the knight faction would be destroyed even before the decisive battle against the noble group...

“Of course, I understand. However, if your highness only maintains the status quo like this, I'm afraid your highness won't be able to win.”

“““You insolent bastard! You low life dares to say that!”““

Angry voices came from the throne room.

However, the princess and the black-haired woman standing beside her did not change their expression.

The one who raised their voices were the men standing under the throne.

“Your majesty! Please let me execute this rude person immediately!”

The man who had an adverse reaction when Mikhail's life was spared, offered to execute Ryouma to the princess.

“Please wait. General. Shouldn't we ask the princess what she wants first?”

“What are you saying, Meltina! Do you want us to keep silent when insulted!? What do you think a Knights pride is?”

(I see... She is Meltina huh?... As expected of the princess' aide...)

Ryouma listened to the argument between Meltina and the man whom she called general in order to get more information, even if it's just a little.

“Please wait! This person has never insulted us in particular! He merely spoke about his personal prediction!”

“What kind of stupid thing are you spouting about! This guy said that we're clearly going to be defeated you know? If that is not an insult then what is the meaning of that!?”

Logically what Meltina had said was right; however, she was unable to quell his anger. When one's emotions prevail, it clouds logical thinking.

It was Princess Lupis who had thought about Ryouma's words who put their argument to end.

“That's enough. You are all in front of a guest, do you know that!?”

There's no mistake that the guest she mentioned here was Ryouma.

Comrades who was arguing in front of the person they both looked down upon as a person of low birth.

Maybe due to realizing how funny they looked, Meltina and the general shut their mouth while lowered their heads in shame.

“We've shown you such an unsightly appearance..... For me, even for a little, I want to decrease the amount of victim in this war, and at the same time, I also wish to win the war against the noble faction... Do you think you will be able to accomplish it?”

The princess finally told Ryouma the words that he wanted to hear.

“Of course... I will answer your highness expectation without fail.”

Saying that, Ryouma bowed his head down toward the princess.

Chapter 11

Audience ③

The 96th day after being summoned to another world.

Ryouma was the only person inside the room in the castle.

There was a little bit of chaos during the audience; however, the princess never changes her decision.

In Ryouma's mind, he remembers the generals' gaze full of hatred being directed to him at the time when he was about to leave the audience room.

(Fuu... Well, I was a newcomer after all, so it can't be helped.)

Actually, there are many things that he's regretting.

In the beginning, he wants to join the princess' faction without causing anyone to be wary of him.

However, even if he said that, nothing would change.

(I should be happy that the princess shows an interest towards my proposal...)

Currently, Ryouma is still not yet formally part of the princess' faction.

Considering everything, it was natural. After all, he has no achievement yet. And from now on, he should start making an achievement.

Thus Ryouma's battle had not yet ended. No- rather, this is where the actual battle starts.

"I'm sorry I've made you wait."

The one who entered the room was Princess Lupis being accompanied by Meltina.

“Oh no, for granting such an impossible wish, I really feel grateful. Your Highness.”

Ryouma raises his body from his chair then lowered his head.

He wants to discuss about what to do from now on, specifically because he had created an inconvenience to the people during the audience.

For that, both Ryouma and the princess moved to another room within the castle.

And for security reasons, only Ryouma was being called.

“Well, you don't have to be that stiff. Please relax and make yourself comfortable.”

“Understood. Then, please excuse me.”

After confirming Princess Lupis and Meltina have sat down, Ryouma once again sits down in his chair as well.

“Then shall we begin our discussion?”

After confirming with the Princess, Meltina starts the talk.

“You should know it already, what we want is a military force.”

This should be equal to having Ryouma and the others in the princess' faction. Meltina said those words while looking at Ryouma as if trying to read his mind, then she continues.

“However...”

“The family of the people who died because of us, you are unable to disregard the families' dissent is it?”

Hearing Ryouma's words, Meltina nodded her head.

“Well, I guess that can't be helped, don't you think? Now then, what's your term?”
Ryouma inquired.

“...Value.”

Meltina answered Ryouma's question briefly.

Although many expectations were hidden within her reply.

“I see... I have to show some value other than being a war potential, is it?”

“After all, if you said you only have war potential then, it would have no difference than hiring mercenaries from somewhere.”

“If that is the case then, your highness will get a bargaining in this negotiation you know?”

Hearing Ryouma's words, Meltina shows an expression as if doubting him.

“Why so?”

“After all, I'll be the one who brings victory for your highness.”

Hearing that, Princess Lupis unintentionally leaked small laughter.

“Fufu... You have such a great confidence ne~?”

“Thank you very much for your praise.”

“However, I can't believe you with just mere words.”

“Of course, I understand that.”

“Then can you prove your words?”

Princess Lupis's tone of voice sounds like she's joking; however, he can feel thirst of blood coming from her gaze.

“Of course... or so that is what I want to say... but, can I ask for confirmation first?”

“What are you trying to do? You, are you trying to deceive her highness?”

Meltina's hand moved toward the sword on her waist.

It seems like she's going to cut his head immediately if he makes a poor excuse here.

“No no no... It's just, how am I going to make a countermeasure if I can't grasp the current situation? Or rather than that... I saw something worrisome during the audience, you know... After all, the situation is entirely different from what I heard from Mikhail. Thus, I want to hear the current situation directly from her highness.”

Meltina who heard Ryouma's explanation turned her line of sight toward the princess for confirmation.

“First, shall we listen about the worrisome matter you had said just now?”

Princess Lupis said those words toward Ryouma while keeping calm.

“Alright... First, I heard from Mikhail that the Knight faction is the princess' faction; however, I guess it was not that simple is it not?”

An unrest expression is shown on the two people's face after they heard Ryouma's words.

While pretending to be calm, Princess Lupis continues the talk.

“Why do you think so?”

“That's because at the time when your highness spared Mikhail's life, some of the people there showed an unpleasant expression. Well, it was only for an instant though. And the thing that I wanted to confirm just now... I've already got the answer from looking at your highness expression.”

“I see... Then, what is your thought regarding that?”

“Regarding the knight faction as your highness base support, we're sure of that, right? However, not all of the knight faction members are supporting your highness. Perhaps, the General who had been arguing against Meltina-san? Is there a separate faction centered around that person? No... opposite of that, it's not like there's a separate faction centered around that general, the general himself is the main actor while the princess is actually only a figurehead, am I right?”

Long silence covered the whole room.

One might wonder just how much their hearts was beating furiously after hearing Ryouma's words.

The answer can be seen just by looking at their expression.

(I hit the mark huh?... That means, I have to change how I should deal with all of this...
No wait, I have to hear the princess's objective first...)

"You're able to understand all of this just from the audience today?"

"Yes."

After the long silence, Princess Lupis finally opens her mouth.

"I see... Indeed, just like you said, having you at my side might be really a bargain..."

"Your highness..."

Meltina voice filled with sorrow and regret can be heard.

"It's fine... There was no meaning in keeping quiet when he has already seen through me this much, don't you think so?"

After saying so, Princess Lupis turned her eyes to Ryouma.

"Just like what you said... I had no choice but to become a figurehead. All the real powers are held by General Hodram."

"I see, that is the name of the person who argued with Meltina-san during the audience, right?"

"Yes."

"Hmm... Then can your highness tell me about the current situation? After all, I can't make any countermeasures without knowing it."

Princess Lupis began to talk after brooding over a little.

“Indeed... First, I should tell you everything about what the knight factions are.”

It took Princess Lupis 30 minutes to explain while getting supplemented by Meltina here and there during the talk.

“I see now; this is indeed quite bad. Even if the knight faction were to win the next political struggle, the future that your highness will get would be the worst.”

Such words come out from Ryouma's mouth after listening to all of the princess' explanation.

Due to General Hodram holding the real power, by the time the political strife against the noble comes to an end, Princess Lupis would literally-

No, if General Hodram was someone who does not care about rebel stigma, after he executes the noble's faction, he might actually sit on the throne himself.

In other words, for the princess to survive, two conditions must be cleared.

One is to win the political strife against the nobles.

During the time the knight faction tried to win against the noble faction, they also had to expand the princess' faction until it has enough power to counter the General.

Even just one of these conditions can be said to be considerably difficult.

Although Meltina and Princess Lupis seems to have understood about this already.

(I thought I was going to pass my predicament smoothly but, it ends up like this huh? Only one-third of the knights from the Knight faction have sworn allegiance to the princess...)

One can say that the Princess faction was being cornered like a mouse.

That's why they found interest toward Ryouma's words, as if clinging to the last straw of hope;

For their own survival.

“I want to make her highness the princess to be the real head of this country! Both in name and reality! You, can you do it?!”

“Meltina... Thank you...”

Princess Lupis said her thanks for Meltina's words.

“I guess so... But I want to confirm. Firstly, for your highness to become a true ruler of Rozeria kingdom. Second, to break away as the knight faction's puppet. You want to aim for these two points right?”

The two people nodded toward Ryouma's words.

“If that is the case, we can do it somehow. After establishing royal authority, whether or not it can be maintained, depends on your highness the princess' ability, however, if it's just to take it... it's possible.”

“Is that true?”

“Of course.”

Towards Ryouma's words, their reply was filled with a mixed feeling of happiness and skepticism.

“How are we going to do that?”

“By splitting the neutral faction.”

The face of the two people clouded with disappointment for Ryouma's words.

“Fuu... it was stupid for the two of us to believe in you.”

Meltina calls him stupid with mocking tone.

“Oh? You don't like it?”

“Of course! I was already doing that since a long time ago!”

“Hou? Meltina-san was?”

A smile appears on Ryouma's face.

“That's right! Everyone would already think about that!”

“And you think nobody notices that?”

“Y-You bastard!”

Maybe Meltina feels like she was getting mocked, she drew her sword.

“Are you looking down on me!”



(I see... With just this much provocation it ends up like this huh?)

He had already expected it since the time he saw what happened during the audience, but still...

(There's no problem in terms of loyalty toward the princess, but, I want someone who's a little bit thoughtful...)

Ryouma thought of something like that while Meltina's sword draws closer to him.

“Stop it!”

“But still your highness!”

“Meltina! Calm down!”

Due to Princess Lupis reprimand her, Meltina reluctantly withdraws her sword.

“However, it was reasonable for Meltina to get angry. Or did you really think you can split the neutral faction?”

One can feel Princess Lupis words contain some thorn in it.

Although she shows some tolerance toward him, she does not have any intention to swallow all Ryouma's words just like that, and she also shows slight displeasure on her face.

Ryouma shows a bitter smile while looking at Princess Lupis, and then he began to talk.

“Well, I'm 80% sure. However before that, I want Meltina-san to do something, is that okay?”

After gazing at the princess, Meltina nodded her head.



“How slow of you! How's the negotiation going?”

The night sky had already ruled over the neighborhood.

Most people inside the castle have already eaten their dinner and currently prepared to enter their bed.

“Sorry about that. Or rather, you both still awake?”

After finishing his talk with the princess, Ryouma heads toward the room he was allocated to, when he opened the door he saw Laura and the others whom he considered already sleeping standing in front of him.

“Of course. We won't sleep until master return!”

Sara nodded at Laura's words.

“You're not the only one who stayed awake you know?”

“What, there's Lione-san too huh?”

“What do you mean with ‘what’! Geez... I was wondering how the negotiation was going, to the point I can't stop my heart from beating fast!”

Lione who sat down in front of the table that is placed in the middle of the room protested.

“Because you felt nervous thus you ended up waiting is it?”

Due to the scattered bottles of wine on the top of the table, Ryouma didn't think she's that worried about him.

“Nee-san believed young master and had been waiting for you to return, you know?”

“Bolts! You don't have to say such an unnecessary thing!”

Then Lione erases her smile and turns her line of sight toward Ryouma.

“So? How is the negotiation going? Is it going as you had expected?”

She immediately returns the topic as soon as she sobered up, it seems like she holds back on her drinking a bit.

“Yes. Though I was planning to tell you about it tomorrow. Since Lione-san is already here, I guess I should just tell you now. Laura, Sara. Both of you please sit down as well.”

“Emm... what about the meal?”

“Ah, forget about that. There's no problem if I just skip one meal.”

“Understood.”

Ryouma wondered if the sisters actually prepared his meal already, as he ordered the sister to sit down when they were about to head toward the inner room, he then began his explanation regarding the negotiation.

“What did you say!? The princess' faction is in that kind of disadvantage!?”

The first who raises voice after listening to Ryouma's explanation was Lione. Bolts and the sisters' face also shows a gloomy expression.

“Well, there's nothing that can be done about it.”

“But still, to think that there's a dispute within the Knight faction between the general faction and the queen faction is a little bit...”

“Well, I guess that's how the big-shots usually are, I guess?”

Toward Laura's words, Lione replies in a somewhat philosophic way.

In that regard, it might be because of the difference in life experience.

“But then again, are you really going to help them when you already know they were in that kind of situation?”

“Well, if we leave it as it is, it would be impossible. At least, if the princess does not have the power to hold up against the general after the political strife against the noble faction end, it would be over for them.”

If one considered the way General Hodram talks or how he looked at Ryouma and the others, he might just laugh and ignore them despite the fact that they had already asked the princess to help them in exchange for helping her to fight the noble faction.

If Ryouma handles this poorly, when the political strife ends, they might send an army to get rid of him.

“If that is the case then, there's no other choice other than building the princess' faction's strength huh?”

The reason why Bolts's voice lacked energy was because if he had to analyze everything as a mercenary, it would be very difficult for them to win in this kind situation.

“But not all is bad. At least, the princess is willing to help and back us up if we assist them.”

Because the possibility of winning is slim, usually it makes such agreement end up having more binding force.

“But, are you really sure you can win over the neutral faction?”

“Sure. Since I've asked Meltina-san to demonstrate how she negotiated a while ago. I will go and catch the fish.”

Everyone showed a pondering expression after looking at the face of Ryouma who had responded to Lione's question.

They are wondering why after seeing how Meltina had done the negotiations, Ryouma considered it as confirmation of success.

“Well, we will talk about that after I succeed on doing the actual negotiation. For now, Lione and the others will be put under the princess' direct command. Your main duty would be guarding the castle and practice until the war starts.”

Up until here, Ryouma stops talking and directs his gaze at Lione.

“? What? Is there anything else?”

“No. Lione-san, how many people does Red Lion have?”

“Including me, there are 22 people who are able to fight. There's a guy who got his shoulders injured by an arrow during the last surprise attack, but if that guy's injury were to get better, then there would be 23 people.”

“We are slightly lacking in numbers huh... Lione-san, can you gather around 70-80 people without going through the guild?”

“Well, since I have some mercenary friends and acquaintances, it is possible... but do you have the money?”

It was unusual for Lione to reply with such bad manners.

“How much?”

“Let's see... If you want people with capability like me then... I want around 300 gold coins.”

“Understood. I will ask Laura to get the money tomorrow, so can you gather them immediately?”

“S-Sure. If you have the money, then it's fine.”

Lione was taken aback due to how Ryouma brought out a large sum of money easily.

“For now, tomorrow would be the start of our battle! What kind of action we make, and how we conduct ourselves will decide everything!”

Everyone nodded their head vigorously after hearing Ryouma's words.

They understood that in order to survive this battle; they cannot lose.

Chapter 12

Wavering People ①

103rd day after being summoned to another world.

“I'm sorry to disturb you during your busy time like this. We sincerely appreciate Earl Bergston's generosity. I'm Mikoshiba Ryouma, a messenger of the princess. Pleased to meet you.”

Ryouma lowered his head toward the man who sat in front of him.

This place is two days away from the royal capital city Preaus; a territory that belongs to the neutral faction.

The sun is currently near its peak, which common sense indicates it was near a lunch time.

Such a time was an inappropriate time to visit a noble.

“No, when it comes to the princess' messenger, I cannot be crude.

Especially if Meltina-dono is also together here with you.”

Earl Bergston offered Ryouma and Meltina to sit down while laughing heartily.

“Now then, what kind of business do you have?”

Of course, that question is just mere courtesy.

When the political situation is unstable, a messenger from princess' faction has come to Earl Bergston who belonged to a neutral faction.

Anyone who has a bit of brain will be able to pick up what's going on immediately.

“Very well, let me immediately relay the message.”

Towards Ryouma's words, Earl Bergstone frowned.

As a matter of fact, Meltina had already asked Earl Bergston to support the princess' faction back in the first month of the year.

Of course, at that time the Earl's answer was no, however this time, a messenger from the princess' faction has come again, to be honest, the Earl feels amazed.

“Hou? A message huh?”

(What's going on?... In the first place, who is this guy? There should be no one like him in the Knight faction nor the noble faction...)

The Earl, who thought that Meltina was going to be the one who takes the initiative to talk found himself in confusion.

A man whom the Earl doesn't know began to speak.

One can say that he feels very perplexed.

“Yes. Her highness the princess feels extremely saddened.”

“Hou? Saddened about what?”

There's no change on Bergston's face.

“Regarding the fate of the Bergston Earldom, who can be said to be among the most prestigious family in Rozeria Kingdom.”

Listening to Ryouma's words, Earl Bergston desperately tried to hold himself back from shouting.

Just like the time when Meltina had come, she also began telling him about how the princess feels saddened due to the strife with the noble faction.

But then they suddenly talk about the Bergston's family future.

And furthermore, if one also included the preface where the princess is saddened, it

could mean this is going to be bad for the Bergston's family.

Despite them wanting to seek his assistance they said something like that, which makes it no wonder if the Earl wants to raise a shouting protest.

After all, the princess' faction is the one in disadvantageous who need outside assistance.

Nevertheless, Earl Bergston keeps smiling as if nothing had happened.

“Hou? The future of my houses huh? It was an honor for us, for the princess to be worried about the future of a small house like ours despite having a lot of things that she needs to think of. Could you tell her highness the princess that this Earl feels very grateful toward her?”

Such an answer can be said as a perfect answer.

After all, while expressing his gratitude as a noble superficially, he also slips some mockery against the princess.

As if saying ‘are you really in the position to worry about my house?’

(Fuhnn... First of all, I need information...)

Ryouma feels relieved in certain ways due to the Earl's answer.

Ryouma had thought, what the princess needed most is someone who has brains.

Not only the military, the princess is also lacking in everything; political power, economy, diplomacy, and also culture.

Of course, all of that might not be the duty of the princess alone.

However, Princess Lupis only has the military around her.

Even Meltina, whom can be regarded as the princess' close aide, setting aside her personal force and loyalty to the princess, her intelligence and ability in politics

cannot be relied upon at all.

It might be due to her occupation as a knight.

What a knight need is mostly only their ability and knowledge in military arts and also their loyalty to the royal family.

Of course something like that is important. However, they tend to look down and put less emphasis on being calculative and thoughtful.

Although that kind of thing is not bad in its own right.

After all, what a knight needs most are honor and pride.

However, when one views things as an organization, only having those can be said as something distorted and incomplete.

That's why Ryouma chooses Earl Bergston to bring him over to the princess' faction.

Despite being good as a political force, he was someone who has an arrogant and rude attitude; thus he gets excluded and neglected by both Duke Gerhardt faction and the previous king Farst as well.

"You're being humble. Bergston Dukedom, in addition to having a vast territory, the population is also huge. And also have around 1000 armed force, am I right? Thus it cannot be regarded as something 'small'."

"Messenger-dono seems to have overrated my household. Or is your judgement clouded because you're in the middle of a fight against the noble faction? Hahahaha..."

"No no no. My judgment is right, you know? For the proof of that, even Lord Gerhardt will soon turn his hot gaze towards the Bergston Earldom. Or do you already belong to the noble faction?"

“Wha-! Now, that worries me. Something like that is just baseless rumors, and better not to talk about it.”

Earl Bergston then laughed, skillfully concealing his surprise that appears for a moment.

“Oh is that so? If that is the case her highness the princess will also feel relieved. Because the princess will be saddened if Earl Bergston were to not gain anything and is left as someone useless until the end of times.”

“What! What does that mean?!”

Listening to Ryouma's words, Earl Bergston's face changed.

“Ara? What's wrong? I thought all of this was just some baseless rumors?”

Listening to Ryouma's words, Earl Bergston fixes his posture and heaves a big sigh.

“Fuu... Let's stop all of this farce already... You should already know that I belong to the noble faction, am I right?”

Earl Bergston said those words as if he was giving up on something.

“Indeed.”

Ryouma's tone was light; however, Meltina desperately tried to suppress her shocked feeling.

(I-Impossible! What's the meaning of this!? Earl Bergston had already sided with the noble faction? Since when?! No, more importantly, since when did this man notice that?!?... For now, I should just dutifully perform my duty. I cannot afford myself to become a burden for this man!)

Ryouma did not say anything at all to her.

It can be said it would be reasonable if she feels upset instead.

The purpose of Meltina being there is to indicate that Ryouma is a newcomer from the princess' faction.

Only that.

Ryouma continues the talk despite the slight unrest within his heart.

"I don't know where the information have leaked, but the decision won't change you know?"

Earl Bergston said those words while his gaze tries to probe Ryouma.

"I do not mind about that."

"What?!"

"Because the one who will find themselves in disadvantage is Earl Bergston. In other words, only you will lose."

Listening to Ryouma's words, Earl Bergston enters a deep thought for a moment.

"...What do you mean by that? What are you trying to say? You said I would be in disadvantage?"

After a long silence, Earl Bergston finally urged Ryouma to explain it to him.

"Ara? You don't realize it?... Since I feel slightly sorry, I will try to explain it then."

The explanation Ryouma makes would then give Meltina and Earl Bergston a strong impression.

"Earl Bergston, think about it, what kind of term did they give in exchange for you to join the noble faction?"

To Ryouma's question, Earl Bergston answers it reluctantly.

"In the event when Princess Ladine gets the throne, they had promised to increase my territory and also the position of finance minister."

"Hou, I see... Indeed, those are some favorable conditions."

"That's right! Can the princess' faction match this kind of offer?!"

Toward Earl Bergston question, Ryouma tried to hide his laughter desperately.

“Well, there's no difference as to being able to give or not. Tell me, what did you need to do to get all that reward?”

“.....”

Earl Bergston closes his mouth.

Just because he was interested in the reason why he will be the one in disadvantage, he can't easily disclose the noble faction's plan readily to the princess' faction.

“Stay and work as a neutral faction member, and do not move the Bergston Earldom soldiers. It was something along those lines right?”

“Wha-!”

A surprised voice leaked from Earl Bergston's mouth.

“Well, after all, there's nothing that Earl Bergston can do other than that. That is what the noble faction thought.”

“What do you mean?”

“Oh well, let us assume that all had gone according to their plan, do you think they will give you such rewards with that small amount of work?”

Earl Bergston then entered in deep thought after Ryouma said those words. Indeed, one can say that the rewards are too good.

Since other than keeping the soldiers from moving and working as a neutral faction, there's nothing to lose for Earl Bergston.

“After all, they gave you a promise that they have no intention of fulfilling from the start.”

Hearing Ryouma's words, Earl Bergston face went pale.

“I-Impossible... That kind of thing is...”

“To realize all of that would be impossible. Giving you the position of finance minister, and an increase in territory. They belong to the noble faction after all.”

In the first place, what is a nobleman?

That is a term given to some people who were granted a territory and a certain autonomy by the kingdom.

On the contrary, a knight is a soldier who reports directly to the royal family, and despite having a similar status as the nobleman, they usually do not have territorial status.

The Knights are the essence of the military power; thus their aim is to earn promotion in a military position.

Although there are some special officials which the noble and the knight attached to each other, but mostly, the nobles dominated the domestic affairs, while the Knights will dominate the military affairs.

Now here is the problem.

Say if they defeated the Knight faction, will there be an important position within the domestic affairs available?

The answer is no.

The office that would be vacant after defeating the knight faction will be those that are related to military affairs.

And even if the position of Finance Minister is opened up, the possibility of it being given to Earl Bergston is zero.

Because a person who was part of the noble faction earlier than him would fill that seat.

If he was helping in a great deal to the side that was overwhelmingly weaker, then it might be considered as an exceptional reward.

However, the noble faction was already the dominant one.

There's no way for him to overtake the one who already part of the dominant faction earlier than him.

And with that, one can see it was impossible to increase more territory as well. Because the knights, from the beginning, do not possess significant amount of land either.

Thus, what is left, are areas directly under the royal family's possession.

However, do you think Duke Gerhardt will grant you such a thing?

It might be possible if the Duke tried to weaken or took the royal authority for himself.

But if the noble faction won, do you think Lord Gerhardt, who is the faction leader and would become someone who has even the authority over the queen do that?

Regardless of whether he has the ambition to take the throne for himself, do you think he will share it among the noble and neutral noble?

Even if that is the truth, do you think he will give it to a faction who does not work much?

One can say that it's impossible to do that.

If he were to share them, he would share them with those who have already accompanied him for many years.

Otherwise, the faction itself might crumble.



Listening to Ryouma's explanation, Earl Bergston's face turns paler.

“That means I was stupid huh?...”

Such words of self-mockery leaks out from the Earl's mouth.

“It is good if you understand.”

Hearing such explanation, even someone like Meltina easily agrees with him.

(This guy...)

Meltina, who was witnessing Ryouma's ability, strongly felt fear and at the same time relieved that he was on their side.

(This guy, how far is he able to read all of this?? Isn't he just a mercenary? Not only that, it's only been a week since he was here...)

“What should I do?”

With voice lacking in power Earl Bergton asked Ryouma.

“Let see... Even if you stay with the noble faction as it is, your future seems to be bleak. On the other hand, even if you join the Knight faction, you will just get yourself crushed by that General Hodram huh?”

There's some other meaning within those words.

Earl Bergston immediately open his mouth after thinking for a while.

“Say, if I were to support her highness the princess... that is...”

Although his words were ambiguous, what he means is 'what are you going to give me as a reward if I join the princess' faction?', that kind of thing.

“Let’s see... Of course, the position of finance minister is impossible, but...”

Listening to Ryouma's words, Earl Bergston's face turns cloudy.

But after hearing the words after that, colour returned to his face.

“If her highness the princess wins the political strife, the nobles would be drastically reduced... With that being the case, many vacant jobs would be available... what do you think?”

In other words, if the princess' faction were to win, many of the jobs that the noble faction holds would be vacant. And it will be the nobles who support the princess, who would then fill that vacant job seats.

And in addition to that, since the base power of the princess is the knight faction, once the princess wins, he would still be able to ask for a higher position even if he was late to join.

Furthermore, since the opponent’s territory will also be seized, Bergston Earldom can expect an increase in land area as well.

With Earl Bergston being able to draw the future possibility with just words coming from Ryouma, he ends up adding the princess' faction as a possible choice.

(Not bad at all... It is much better than assisting the noble faction and end up with nothing... however, that is ‘if’ the princess' faction wins... if she were unable to win then the present story would have no meaning...)

“Mikoshiba-dono... I would like some time to think about it.”

“Very well. Just, how much time do you need? Since there's not much time left after all.”

Ryouma does not think that Earl Bergston would help and support the princess' faction here and now either.

Because for Earl Bergston, this will be a big gamble which will influence his entire life.

However, Ryouma can't have his time stolen solely by Earl Bergston alone.

Since he also has to pull the other neutral factions to their side as well.

“I would like to have one night to think... I will give the answer tomorrow Thus, how about staying in our residence today?”

“Very well... I will wait for Earl's wise decision.”

After replying so, Ryouma grasped the Earl's hand in a handshake.

Chapter 13

Wavering People ②

103rd day after being summoned to another world.

“What should I do, I wonder...”

Earl Bergston who extended the date for his reply until tomorrow repeated such words again and again inside his personal office.

“That guy... what he said is reasonable... how have I not notice such thing when the noble faction invites me to join them...”

His words are filled with regrets.

In case if Bergston Earldom were to stay as a neutral faction, it would not matter who won. However, since he was deceived by the sweet temptation and joined the noble faction, he only has two choices left;

Either stay with the noble faction or join the Knight faction.

If he were to return back as a neutral faction, then he would just end up being targeted by both the noble faction and the Knight faction.

And then there's another problem. The man who brought this talk to him says that he should join the princess' faction.

Even looking like this, Earl Bergston has sufficient knowledge about the power balance within the royal palace. A noble won't be able to keep their territory without that kind of knowledge after all.

Thus the Earl understood that even if the knight faction is the princess' power base,

General Hodram basically held the real power.

“That man that comes with Meltina-dono... He seems to be directly under her highness the princess. If that is the case then... This is not an invitation to join the Knight faction but the princess' faction.”

Depending on how the princess makes her move, after they won against the noble faction, there might be a war between the princess' faction against the Knight faction. Like this, it was natural for him to feel hesitation; after all, he was being invited by the smallest faction, which is inferior in all sense.

“To support them, one must have the resolution to throw away everything...”

He has to be prepared to throw away the wealth and territory that the Bergston family had built up over the years.

“The problem is whether the princess could win or not...”

In the end, the entire problem ends up with that question.

Whether or not, his support will bring the princess' faction victory.

For Earl Bergston, his loyalty to the royal family is not that low; however, it is also not that high to the point of sacrificing his house and family.

That's why, at the time when Meltina offered an invitation which he rejected, and also at the time when he accepted the noble faction offer, he feels a slight disdain toward his own self.

“Back then, there's not even one possibility that the princess' faction could win...”

Meltina's way of negotiation is simple.

She just talks about justice and loyalty to the royal family in earnest.

Of course something like that was important, however, it is not enough to convince the heart of the neutral faction.

And if one were to wonder why.

Someone who can emphasize loyalty and true justice won't be part of neutral faction after all.

Before Meltina invites him, she asked him to pledge his loyalty to the princess.

However, what Earl Bergston wanted to ask was what kind of reward the princess will give in exchange for that assistance and loyalty.

Helping the princess and all is great.

But moving the soldiers cost money to buy armor, weapon, and food.

If a soldier shows an achievement, then he must be rewarded.

It won't be as simple as just saying "Good work!".

And Meltina was unable to understand that.

She just talks about loyalty to the princess like a broken recorder.

With just that, she won't be able to persuade any noble.

That's why Earl Bergston abandoned the princess.

Even if Meltina, who was being called as a close aide to the princess was there, he had no choice other than to think that the princess does not have talented people around her. With that being the case, he felt lucky to be invited by the noble's faction instead.

After all, no matter whom, they will join the side that is most likely to win.

All the more if they were being offered the possibility of gaining power and increase in territory.

However, due to that, the Earl is currently suffering.

Due to the princess' messenger called Mikoshiba Ryouma.

“I don't know who that guy is... but... he's sharp. To the point that I think he was too sharp...”

Mikoshiba Ryouma.

Someone who has the brains suddenly appear within the princess' faction whom he thought does not have such a person.

Although the Earl had just met him today, he can feel that the judgment ability of that man can be trusted.

He also shows a considerable capability in diplomacy.

Thus, there's the possibility that the princess' future might change as well.

The noble faction is also currently looking for additional support by offering the same rewards to the neutral faction.

However, after listening to that man, the Earl thought that only fools would believe the noble faction.

It can be said that there is a big possibility that they would be swayed toward the princess' faction.

The princess' faction can also handle General Hodram in the same way.

With that being the case, if that man was there, it is possible for the princess to hold all of the power.

That's why the Earl feels troubled.

“Ah... What should I do...”

KonKon

“Master? The dinner is ready. The visitors are waiting in the dining room as well.”

It was the voice of a maid who works in the mansion that returned Earl Bergston's sanity back.

At the time he looks out the window, the night has already dominated the sky. The negotiation with Ryouma had ended around 1 o'clock in the afternoon, which means Earl Bergston have been inside his room for around 5-6 hours.

"Ah... Yes... I'll immediately go."

After saying those words to the maid, Earl Bergston tidied himself up and went toward the dining room.

"Dear? Are you worried about something?"

After having finished dinner, worried about her husband, Earl Bergston's wife entered his office.

"What? Oh, it's you... there's nothing I'm worried about. What's wrong?"

After he had tried to hide his fatigued self, he told his wife to sit down on the sofa.

"You looked strange during dinner after all... Are you sure that there's nothing you're worried about?"

Although the Bergston family chef cooked a whole roasted chicken, the Earl did not eat much.

One can also see that he did not enjoy the meal either.

"No... Everything is alright. You don't have to worry about anything."

"No! You can't be like that. 20 years had passed since I've been married to you... It is impossible for me not to notice that your behavior is strange!"

She's just a wife worried about her husband from the bottom of her heart. Although one can say it was political marriage, she's a wife who comes to love and respect her husband who turned 43 years old this year, and he also loves his wife too.

"Is it because of the visitors that came today?"

The Earl who didn't show anything wrong this morning, suddenly shut himself up inside his office from the afternoon until night.

Thus it was natural for her to think that as the cause.

The earl's wife looked at his face and began to ask a question.

“By any chance... is there anything to do with the royal palace?”

Although she's a nobleman's wife, a woman is someone who would not understand about a power struggle.

No, in a sense, usually women are more sensitive to this kind of things.

Much more when we talk about the life and death of the kingdom itself.

His wife who saw his attitude thought that her guesses were right.

“Dear... Aren't we a married couple?... Even if I cannot help you with it, won't you share your problem with me even if it's just a little bit?”

Listening to his wife's words, his heart somehow feels relieved.

He wants someone to hear about the things that he kept inside his heart.

After all, the Earl feels anxious to the limit right now.

“I don't understand much about politics, but I don't think the princess would treat you unfairly when she wins if you help her in a time of crisis like this.”

Although she hesitated, his wife told him what she thinks after she heard the story from her husband.

“I know about that. But that is not the problem. The problem is whether the princess can win or not even with my help!”

He did not tell everything to his wife.

The fact that there's a lack of talented people among the princess' faction.

Which means he might be able to get a good position if the princess wins.

But that is 'if' the princess wins.

"Dear... If that is the case then you just have to make the princess win, no?"

The Earl froze after hearing his wife's words.

"You're a smart person. I've never doubted your ability ever since I married you... I believe that you're someone who can support this Rozeria Kingdom. That's why I don't like it when I see you wavering like this! Please regain the confidence you once had! If this was 12 years ago, you wouldn't be hesitating like this! If it's the former you then..."

"The former... me..."

The Earl recalled the old him who's brimming with confidence.

Twelve years ago, at the time when Earl Bergston was still in his early 30s, he was regarded as one of the most influential people in the country.

It all crumbled down at the time when Duke Gerhardt had defeated his wife's father, Marquis Ernest, the Prime Minister of Rozeria kingdom in a political strife. Marquis Ernest's territory was confiscated, and the family name had ceased to exist.

At that time, most of his blood relative was banished from the kingdom.

Only his wife and her sister who married into another family that was able to stay within the country.

As a result of that, Earl Bergston was kicked out from the central politics.

It was not because of his ability.

But because his wife is the daughter of their political enemies, Duke Gerhardt doesn't want him near the central politic.

12 years since then, the Earl desperately tried to protect his territory.

He joined the neutral faction and waited for the storm to pass.

Due to playing defense all this time, Earl Bergston's fangs have become dull.

"I won't worry much if it was the former me huh?..."

I won't be this worried.

Because I had absolute confidence in my ability.

(If myself from 12 years ago were present here, what would I do? Will I wait for Meltina-dono to come and offer me an invitation? No... I would proactively be part of the princess faction and help her highness with my strength. Will I also consider whether the princess would win or not? Stupid! If that is the case then I will just make her win with my own power!)

The words from his wife immediately made the man who had been playing defensive for the past 12 years returned to his former glory self.

His ambition and self-confidence is gradually coming back.

"I will be joining her highness the princess' faction, glory or nothing! Naturally, your fate might also be doomed with mine... Will you stay by my side until the end?"

"Absolutely. Even if I end up with a guillotine over my neck, I will still follow you until death, my dear!"

After hearing his wife's determination, Earl Bergston finally decided.

And the Earl who has already made his decision this time won't waver.

He decided to make the princess the ruler of this kingdom with his own power, whether or not she will win does not matter anymore.

"I will immediately go to Ernan's place. Please help me with the preparation."

"Now?"

The wife showed a perplexed face. It's already passed 8pm o'clock.

Even if he goes out now, it's already late.

“That's right. I've delayed answering Mikoshiba-dono until tomorrow. But won't that be boring if I said 'Yes' to them just like that?”



Earl Ernan Zerev.

He is a noble who owns lands bordered to Earl Bergston's land.

And he is also the man who took the sister of Earl Bergston's wife as his wife.

He is also part of the neutral faction, and is also being antagonized by Duke Gerhardt.

(Having me switch side from the noble faction to the princess' faction is the achievement of Mikoshiba-dono... But having Ernan move to the princess faction will be my achievement. Beside, Ernan is my brother-in-law... He is someone whom I can trust.)

Earl Bergston, who is going to participate in the princess' faction, has regained his former vigor.

Even if Earl Bergston joins the princess' faction, it would only end up as Ryouma's achievement.

There would be nothing to evaluate from Earl Bergston who changes side.

However, what if he brings other nobles together with him?

That would be Earl Bergston's achievement.

That's why, since he wants to secure a good position after joining the princess' faction, he cannot afford to fail here.

“You must keep Mikoshiba-dono entertained as much as possible tomorrow. You hear? Do not let him leave before I return!”

“I understand. Please be careful on your way.”

Seemingly happy looking at her husband who regained his former radiance, she bowed her head to her husband who leaves the house.

Chapter 14

Wavering People ③

Day 119 after being summoned to another world.

“What the hell happened?!”

Duke Gerhardt is unable to hide his frustration.

Day after day, unpleasant reports have come to him who supposedly is in an advantageous position.

“T-That is...”

“That's what!? Say it clearly!”

The man who is Duke Gerhardt's aide is also lost for words.

The only thing they know is that in the last few days, the neutral faction who had promised their assistance to them had switched over to the princess' faction side.

And they were the nobles who own some level of territory that went over.

Those nobles are the people who had joined the noble faction due to the favorable rewards that they had been promised.

Moreover, the condition they asked for in return is only not to move their soldiers and give support to Princess Ladine.

The nobles who accepted the deal will gain huge benefits in exchange for some low risk jobs.

The nobles who were part of the neutral faction is in fact part of the nobles' faction.

Of course, Duke Gerhardt never had any intention on keeping his promise to those nobles.

After all, thinking mathematically, it would take half of the kingdom's territory just to increase their land as a reward.

But of course, something like that cannot happen.

"There are only two things that I can understand. Those nobles had sworn their loyalty to the princess' faction one after another. And..."

The aide stopped his words there.

If he continues, his Lord would become outraged.

But if he kept on being silent as well, it would also end up with the same result; he was able to understand that thanks to his experience.

The aide prepares himself to be blasted by his Lord's furious wrath.

"There are also nobles who had a firm stance in supporting their faction among them..."

"What does that mean? A firm stance?... Do you mean they strengthened their territory guard?"

Duke Gerhardt asked as if he had become stupid.

"That is... They seem to have gathered the territory soldiers and entered the royal capital."

"What did you say!?"

Duke Gerhardt did not hide his surprised expression.

That is something that he cannot overlook.

Even if the nobles changed sides to the princess', Duke Gerhardt won't have much problem.

However, if the territory troops join them at the royal capital then, this changes everything.

To change sides.

One might think they will become a large force, but in reality, it is not.

Because those who changes side around this time are those who hates losing their money.

Someone who does not contribute much to a faction would usually change side with some incentive.

For example, even if the princess' faction were to raise their flag, if they don't offer any funds, mostly those people will reply with uncooperative-like attitude.

At least, that's how it's supposed to be.

Because he understood that, at the time he invited them, Duke Gerhardt did not ask for excessive cooperation from them.

Because he knows that they wouldn't help him even if he asked for it anyway.

That's why Duke Gerhardt feels a sense of danger.

He thought that they only supported the princess by staying within their own territory.

"What does this mean... are they really joining the princess'- No, in the first place, who are they?"

"First it was Earl Bergston, then Earl Zerev, and then there were also small nobles who held territory around them had entered the royal capital."

"Khuu... That Earl Bergston bastard! Always trying to obstruct me... No, wait, the princess'? It was not the knight faction, but the princess'?"

Since he was so angry, Duke Gerhardt did not notice such detail.

“Yes, I’m also curious about that, but no matter how much I investigated... it is definitely not the knight faction, they belong to the princess’ faction...”

It might sound the same, but the truth is quite different.

Although the knight faction is, without a doubt, the princess’ base support.

The reason for them to support her is not because she's the princess nor because she's the leader of the imperial guard chivalric order.

But it was because of General Hodram who is currently supporting Princess Lupis.

The ones who swore loyalty to Princess Lupis is Meltina, the vice-leader of the chivalric order, and others, which are just some low-class knights.

Most of the middle ranked knights who hold units are part of General Hodram’s clique.

Princess Lupis is merely a figurehead of the Knight faction.

However, several nobles appear to support such princess.

An aristocrat has military power in accordance to the scale of their territory.

Middle ranked noble such as Earl Bergston, possesses military power around 1,000.

If one were to include Earl Zerev and the small nobles around them, the princess would easily get around 4,000 of war potential.

Of course, Duke Gerhardt, the current leader of the noble faction has around 40,000 troops.

Furthermore, if he does not care about his own territory and conscript the farmers

and hired the mercenaries, that can easily exceed 60,000.

Currently General Hodram's forces are around 15,000 troops.

Even if they both combined their force, it is still less than 20,000.

Although it was worrisome that some nobles had switched over to the princess' side, Duke Gerhardt still holds the advantage.



After Duke Gerhardt dismissed his aide, he sank deeper into his seat while brooding over the situation.

(Princess Lupis... Does she plan on taking power from Hodram?)

Such thought crosses over Duke Gerhardt's mind.

If one were only looking at the behavior of Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev, nothing much could be analyzed.

And he also denied such an idea himself.

(No... That is impossible. Princess Lupis can't do something like that...)

Duke Gerhardt doubted Princess Lupis' capability.

Princess Lupis turned 22 years old this year.

She was the leader of the royal guard chivalry order for around five years, thus he can't say that she's incompetent.

However, that is only applies to military affairs.

Though, it was natural for her to end up like that.

She had never participated in any government affairs.

No matter who, one cannot do anything and expect a quality result without any experience.

When it comes to capable people by her side; the subject would not change either, since there's only Meltina who is also the deputy leader of the Royal Guard as the princess' aide.

Moreover, Gerhardt himself recognises that people from the army are usually lacking in the brain department.

In other words, it would be impossible to maintain Rozeria Kingdom with only the princess' power alone.

(Had Princess Lupis have the total control of either military or politics, it would be different... yet again, even the military, there's Hodram. Though it seems like her power is strengthening with the support of another party. It was not her personal power.)

Duke Gerhardt himself knows what Hodram is aiming at, since they have a similar ambition.

(Even if it's slow, Hodram will eventually abandon the princess, and within three years... She will either get killed or confined... he will definitely do one of them.)

Duke Gerhardt himself has no interest in taking the throne for himself.

Because he is more concerned about profits rather than fame.

Whereas General Hodram is the type of person who cares for both fame and profits.

Although he seem only to be chasing after profits, in the future, he might seek some fame himself.

And that fame is called being the king.

(If they win, I will die, but that will also be the same for Princess Lupis. No matter who wins, she will end up dying...)

For Gerhardt who has another figurehead in the name of Princess Ladine, Princess Lupis is nothing more than a bother.

When two people want to succeed the throne, it might cause the eruption of a civil war.

However, Duke Gerhardt has a question regarding Princess Ladine's legitimacy himself.

It's true that she does have the same silvery hair, just like the previous king, and there's also a similarity regarding her features.

Since he made use of the king's will, one can't easily call it fake either.

However, since Duke Gerhardt himself is the mastermind of the current situation and being someone who had survived through a lot of political struggle, he somewhat feels that everything about the current situation is fabricated.

The king passed away, and an illegitimate child had been found before someone could succeed the throne.

One might say that the timing is too good.

Still, he ends up supporting Princess Ladine, since he needed someone with Royal Bloodline to fight against General Hodram.

After all, if he fought against the knight faction who has Princess Lupis without bringing any figurehead, people might put a stigma on him as a rebel.

If that happens, he might find himself betrayed even by the people from the noble faction.

Gerhardt himself thinks that all of this is stupid, but it is absolutely necessary to have a justification for wars.

Even if that justification is merely a lie.

(Well, whatever. Even if she's a false princess, if I recognize her, she will become genuine one... I can easily dispose of her if she's a fake...)

A smile appears on Gerhardt's face after thinking until there.

Now that the justification has already been fulfilled, what one needs is the war forces' strength.

Currently, the noble faction has an advantage over numbers, and the matter of pulling the neutral faction towards them is also going well.

Even if it gets reduced a little due to the princess' faction, it does not pose much of a problem.

(The real problem is what had the princess decided to start now... It does not seem to be the idea of that deputy leader. Does that mean she has someone else pulling the strings?)

He does not mind ignoring all of it since he was still in the advantageous situation; however, Duke Gerhardt does not like the secret maneuvers that the princess' faction is making.

“...Someone!”

Gerhardt who finally got his thoughts settled, called for his aide.

“Did you call?”

“Umu... I'm slightly concerned about the princess' faction recent maneuvers.”

“Would you like to send a spy?”

“Umu. I don't care how much money you use. Hire the best person for this job.”

His aide shows a surprised expression.

After all, he knows that his master is not a generous person.

“Investigate if there's an able aide near the princess... If so, kill that person immediately!”

Duke Gerhardt who had won many political struggles has never place his hope on optimistic judgments.

He gained the power in his hands by removing any obstacle beforehand.

“Certainly.”

His aide then leaves the room after lowering his head respectfully.

“Whoever they are... if they dare to interfere with my plans, then I will kill them!”

Duke Gerhardt was ready to use anything at his disposal. In order to rule over this country named Rozeria.

Chapter 15

Wavering People ④

Day 130 after being summoned to another world.

“I look forward to your future loyal service.”

During the audience, when Princess Lupis made such a statement, all five nobles in front of her lowered their heads in silent consent.



“It’s going well, huh...”

Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev nodded their heads at Ryouma, agreeing with what he had said.

After the meeting with Princess Lupis ended they gathered in another of the castle’s many rooms

“This is the result of Mikoshiba-dono’s work.”

Earl Bergston lowered his head toward Ryouma.

Almost a month had passed since the Earl had joined the princess' faction.

During that time, a bond of trust had begun to form between Ryouma, Earl Bergston, and Earl Zerev.

“No, no, this is all thanks to the Earls’ assistance. After all, I'm nothing more than an outsider.”

This was not modesty.

No matter how good of an argument you could come up with, it is not an easy thing for people to disregard each other's social statuses in this world.

One could say it was very fortunate for Ryouma that Earl Bergston was willing to hear him out and even became his friend afterward.

Understanding all of this, Ryouma had put his trust in Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev, enabling the two brothers-in-law to persuade other neutral faction members, that they judged would have a high probability of joining the Princess' faction.

Initially, Meltina opposed him by asking: "Did you promise them some important positions to turn them over to our side?!". However, Ryouma managed to persuade her in the end.

As a consequence of all of this, Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev were showing more results than he had expected of them.

In just half a month, both men had successfully turned some of the neutral faction members throughout the kingdom to the princess' faction.

Of course, that was due to the ability and the influence of the Earls, but it was Ryouma's explanation and his assessment of the current situation which played the biggest role in making both the invitation and negotiation successful.

That's why Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev had never shown any disrespect despite the fact that Ryouma is a commoner.

On the other hand, Ryouma also never grew arrogant just because of his achievements.

"As a matter of fact, there will be even more nobles who will probably swear their allegiance to the princess."

"Indeed. Just like Earl Zerev said, there are many members of the neutral faction who hold their own grudges against the noble faction!"

The grudges that the neutral faction members held against the noble faction were very strong, because they were centered around the fact that they had been alienated from the central politics by that very faction.

After being told that they will be entrusted with policy-making after the war is over, many nobles came forward to pledge their allegiance to the princess with utmost

devotion.

“Well it's good that our numbers are increasing, but...”

Ryouma was smiling bitterly, the exact opposite of the two Earls, who were grinning happily.

From the start Ryouma held the opinion that their current situation means that they should not allow themselves to grow too optimistic.

“Is there something that's bothering you, Mikoshiba-dono?”

Earl Zerev asked Ryouma after seeing Ryouma's expression.

“No... it's just, although I know that it is unavoidable that we will have to confront the noble faction in a decisive battle, I am still worried as to how we should deal with it, when the time comes.”

After pondering the problem for a while, Earl Bergston responded to the issue Ryouma had pointed out.

“Hou... is it the decisive battle against the noble faction itself, or rather its aftermath that Mikoshiba-dono is worried about?”

(Fuu~ ... as expected of him, he understood so much from the few words I said...)

“Earl Bergston, as expected, are you talking about a different fight than the one against the noble faction?” - Earl Zerev suddenly asked.

Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev are great politicians, but of the two of them Bergston is definitely the superior in terms of having a mind for strategy.

Earl Bergson, as if chiding the simple Earl Zerev for only being able to solve problems that are right in front of his eyes, spoke his mind.

“No, that's not it. Originally the Princess, who has the Knight faction on her side, was

lacking as far as the number of soldiers she could muster, but if you take into account her soldiers' superior fighting ability, then you could say that both sides were nearly equal... but now that we have recruited a large part of the neutral faction, even if we were to fight against the noble faction we should have a significant advantage over them... if that is the case, then, as expected..."

Struggling to finish his response, Earl Bergston turned his gaze towards Ryouma.

Saying so little, the Earl had not given a definitive answer.

Ryouma wanted him to say more than he had managed to.

However, looking at Earl Bergston's face, he gave up on the idea.

Ryouma could see that the Earl could not understand the cause for his concern.

He decided to give the two brothers-in-law an explanation of the main problem they were all facing.

"Yes, just like you said. I'm worried about the things that come after the crucial battle... well, I hope we can settle everything before we even have that decisive battle..."

Being prepared ahead of time is an important part of warfare.

It can be said that whether you are victorious or suffer defeat is determined based on how well you have prepared in advance.

Ryouma clearly understood this principle.

And he was not the first person who had thought in such a way.

If he were to read famous 20th century Japanese books, he would have seen many references from ancient military books, both Eastern and Western.

And nowadays there are even people who study Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" and apply it to the field of business.

Apart from being used for warfare, it is also being used in politics.

A present day Japanese person should have knowledge comparable to that of medieval Japan's politicians.

Compared to Earth's wartime era, this world's current era was a lot less chaotic.

And not to mention a situation where one nation concentrates too much on building up its military power and forsakes obtaining knowledge. That country would find itself lagging behind in terms of education, culture, and technology.

<TLN: A good example would be North Korea and its Military-First policy.>

If you think about it, there is a very extreme difference in the standard of living and upbringing of the different social classes.

It is not uncommon for farmers, living in rural areas far away from the capital, to be unable to even write their own names.

And most of the soldiers that the noble families have assembled are mostly made up of such farmers, albeit former ones.

None of them have gone through military training of any sort.

While the soldiers that Earl Bergston brings with him number a thousand, the truth is that they are just an amateur group of “soldiers”.

Of course, the ones who led this militia were people hired by Earl Bergston’s family.

They are individuals who have studied the military arts, or former mercenaries, which separates them from the rest of Bergston’s amateur army.

However, one cannot expect much as far as fighting ability from all of them, soldiers and leaders combined, since the soldiers are mostly amateurs.

But then, the noble faction has exactly the same problem.

They have gathered the same type of inexperienced people for soldiers from within their own territories.

Having said all of that, there is one exception - the Knight faction.

They are genuine soldiers and even the lower ranked ones are capable of using the magic arts.

They are people hired by the country and their wages are paid by the king.

If somebody wants to join the army, they have to pass a test of skill. Hence not everyone can join and become a proper soldier.

Originally their existence was to act as a last line of defence that protects the royal

family.

But now, they have fallen almost completely under General Hodram's influence and he would not think twice about using them to further his own agenda.

Thus, the army that everyone was supposed to trust had instead turned into their enemy.

Because he had had to prepare for the fight against the Knight faction, Ryouma had left the task of recruiting nobles from the neutral faction to Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev.

Although gathering information from the Knight faction was problematic, there is a much bigger problem troubling Ryouma.

Speaking of soldiers, he wanted to minimise the number of casualties as much as possible.

Since it is a profession, the number of skilled people is very limited.

This is one of the main reasons why most monarchs are not strangers to hiring mercenaries.

However, enlisting the services of mercenaries can also be viewed as a last-ditch measure.

In addition to the fact that their ability varies, their loyalty is far worse than a Knight's.

Plus, acquiring capable mercenaries costs a lot of money.

On average, one has to pay five times the annual salary of a knight per mercenary.

On the other hand, unlike the knights that one has to maintain at all times, one can just fire these hired soldiers as soon as they are no longer needed.

To put it simply, one can say the knights are the regular soldiers, while the mercenaries are the irregulars you use when you have no other choice.

Taking all of this into account, the problem that is pestering Ryouma is how they are going to preserve the kingdom after they have replaced General Hodram.

After they win against the noble faction, there will definitely be a struggle for power between the princess' faction against the Knight faction.

This information is common knowledge for the people who both belong to the Princess' faction and have her unwavering trust.

Princess Lupis can take control of the national government if she defeats the noble faction.

This is why they have been courting nobles from the neutral faction.

However, no matter how well the nobles controlled the kingdom's internal affairs, they would not be able to overcome the military power of the knights.

If you take into account the number and types of soldiers each side has, then the Knight faction would be ten times stronger than the Princess and her supporters.

One might ask "If Ryouma doesn't think that's the problem, then what does he think it is?".

The problem is that after they defeat the Knight faction, there won't be anybody left to defend Princess Lupis and preserve the kingdom.

If that was to happen, only chaos would ensue.

The neighboring countries, the ones that were already eyeing the Rozeria Kingdom, would surely unite.

If the Knight faction disappears, the starving wolves would not hesitate to turn their hungry gazes towards the kingdom - unless there's an alternative army ready to take the place of the knights.

And one should not forget that knights are professional soldiers.

You can't just simply hire a farmer, not to mention it takes a lot of time to train them.

Hiring mercenaries is not an option either, as it would cost too much.

And not only that, in term of loyalty, they also cannot be trusted.

Yet, if they do not eliminate the Knight faction then the princess will become their puppet. However, if they eliminate the Knight faction without being able to replace them, then the kingdom's military power would be diminished, and seeing this the neighboring countries would take advantage and invade... This present situation could be thought of as someone being put in a maze that has no exit.

<TLN: A problem without any solutions in sight.>

"I see... as expected of Ryouma, your foresight is amazing."

"Indeed..."

Earl Bergston and Earl Zerev raised voices filled with admiration for Ryouma.

However, seeing both of them act like that, he felt nothing but cold-heartedness.

(To think that even they can't understand something as simple as this... if the cunning Earls cannot... then it would only be natural for neither Princess Lupis nor Meltina to notice this problem, since even the people who are supposed to be capable couldn't get a grasp of the problem)

With that, it can't be helped if Ryouma feels worried.

They are not just ordinary commoners.

It made him wonder whether the people who are supposed to carry the nation's fate on their shoulders were unable to see all of these problems.

But having said all of that, this problem is a minor one for Ryouma.

After all, Ryouma's goal is to get Princess Lupis' backing, so that he can win his future fight against the guildmaster.

This means he does not need to concern himself with the fate of the Rozeria Kingdom if he doesn't plan on living in this country in the future.

For Ryouma, if it's just to take out the knight faction then, he has many ways to accomplish that.

Ultimately, knights in this world are people who hate trickery and scheming.

This might be due to their ability to use magic, since they can just fight with brute force, thus they don't think much about using strategy in warfare.

Ryouma is sure about that because he already asked the Princess, Meltina, and the other knights who had sworn loyalty to the princess, as to how they usually conducted warfare.

Justice, Loyalty, and Pride.

Their logic is that as long they have these three things, they would win any wars.

He had also been shown some knight tactical books, but the content was appalling.

The content of these books was unrelated to battle. Etiquette was the first such example he could remember.

They didn't even have the concept of a formation, let alone a more complex ideas like logistics and chain of supply.

Although this is not something he should say, but he thinks the knowledge in this world is too low.

This was the reason why it is so easy for Ryouma to manipulate people so well.

Well, as a knight, having strong muscles instead of a keen mind is fine.

Above all else, bravery is their greatest virtue.

But for nobles, it cannot be just that.

Although bravery is valuable, the ability to see ahead is much more important for them.

Since they are the ones who will be governing the country, they must be able to anticipate what would happen after they depose the Knight faction and take countermeasures in advance.

Of course, that does not mean all of them should be able to notice that a hole would be left in the kingdom's defense , and it's not like they would be called incompetent if they could not see it.

But if all of the people at the top of the government fail to see such a thing, then that is simply not good.

(Were they just going to ignore the kingdom's defense after they eliminated the Knight faction?)

Ryouma desperately shook off these simplistic and naive thoughts, banishing them from the depths of his mind.

(No... no, I'm overthinking this too much... as one would expect, this is all just too

absurd.)

If something like that really happen, then that would be the end of the Rozeria Kingdom.

Ryouma is a selfish and shrewd man, yet at the same time he considered love, hate, and debt of gratitude as important things.

Although only temporarily, they had become his allies. Thus it was impossible for him to just abandon them without helping them with all of his power.

“What is going on?”

Earl Zerev had started looking at Ryouma's face anxiously.

Ryouma wondered if his expression had changed that much.

“Fumu... Mikoshiba-dono thought that winning against the knights is not our main problem... the problem you've been worried about is how the kingdom will protect itself after we depose General Hodram, am I right?”

After saying that Earl Bergston turned his eyes toward Ryouma.

“Indeed. That is the problem which I was worried about...”

“Then why not just make Meltina-dono take command afterwards?”

“Ooh! As expected of Earl Bergston. What a splendid idea!”

Their idea was to replace General Hodram with someone who's completely loyal to the princess.

Certainly, this proposal meant that they would only need to eliminate Hodram; thus no significant reduction in the kingdom's military power would occur.

However, Ryouma shook his head.

Because he thought that something like that was impossible.

“That is impossible... Meltina is too reckless of a person for such a position.”

Meltina was indeed brave and has a strong sense of justice. More importantly, she's very loyal to the princess.

One could see her as suitable for the job.

However, it was not just pure strength that was needed.

Although Meltina does not like factional disputes and her loyalty to the princess and the kingdom is unquestionable.

The problem is how she thinks that her sense of values is absolute and that other people should have the same values as she does.

In particular, she believes that everyone has to pledge their unconditional loyalty to the royal family.

Of course, that is not completely wrong.

Since she works for the Rozeria Kingdom, it is natural for her to think in such a way.

However, human beings are not simple creatures, they possess a lot of other senses as well.

Such as desire.

Self-defense.

Different ways of thinking.

And other various senses and values.

If she has absolute power, then she wouldn't have to consider other people's wills.

She would just crush them with brute force.

However, the situation that Princess Lupis faces now is not one that can be dealt with mere strength.

In term of a simple power relation, Princess Lupis is the weakest.

Thus she needs someone who can lead the knights and at the same time swear their loyalty to her.

It is crucial for such a person to be able to understand the other knights' dissatisfaction.

With such requirements, it was impossible for someone like Meltina to handle this kind of a job.

“.....”

The Earls, having heard Ryouma's explanation, had remained silent.

Although their eyes didn't shine with confidence like they had before, at least now they knew the importance of the problem as he saw it.

That is why the two of them were unable to say anything.

In their minds, they could even imagine that the knights might run away due to Meltina's immense sense of pride.

“I see... indeed, she would be unfit for the job... but if that is the case, what are you going to do? Are you going to recommend someone from within the Knight faction itself?”

“No... I don't want to do that if possible... since there would always be the possibility that we would end up creating another Hodram.”

Ryouma shook his head, dismissing Bergston's suggestion.

If he suddenly chose a new leader of the knights from within the Knight faction itself, he would surely be thought of as someone that is no longer in the Princess' confidence.

Of course, something like choosing a new leader is not unusual, however, Ryouma cannot risk promoting a knight, as he fears there is a chance of him failing to bring the Knight faction to the Princess' side after General Hodram has been deposed.

And one must not forget that the person who replaces General Hodram would be in a position of great power...

That's why he needs someone trustworthy, someone who would pledge allegiance to Princess Lupis.

All of this for the sake of preventing a second Hodram from appearing.

“Ah, right! There is someone like that!”

“Eh?!”

Ryouma doubted his ears for a moment since it was none other than Earl Zerev, the man who had stayed silent for so long, that had suddenly raised his voice.

“Is that true? Earl Zerev!?”

Earl Bergston’s expression was also beaming with surprise.

“Yes. She’s got not just experience, but also a good personality! I would stake my life on this person’s suitability with confidence!”

“She? Is it a woman?”

“Oh? You’re still puzzled, Earl Bergston? It's her... Rozeria Kingdom's White Goddess of War.”

“That’s right! How could I forget that person!”

[Rozeria's White Goddess of War].

After hearing such a grand title, a look of astonishment appeared on Earl Bergston’s face.

“Just who on earth is she?”

Ryouma asked, and Earl Bergston started answering, feeling anxious all the while.

Chapter 16

Wavering People ⑤

Day 137 after being summoned to another world.

(I see... if it's a person like this, then we might be able to get her to come to our side... but still, isn't she retired? Something feels wrong...)

That was Ryouma's impression of Elena, from the moment he had first seen her in the royal capital Pireaus.

The person who Earl Zerev had called [Rozeria's White Goddess of War] was actually a woman by the name of Elena Steiner.

She was an old lady who had retired from knighthood around ten years ago.

One could see that she was around 50 to 60 years old.

Her blonde hair would have been beautiful when she was younger, but now it had white mixed in here and there.

She gave off the impression of an obstinate neighborhood auntie. But after witnessing her entrance, one could see that she had kept her body in good shape even after she had retired.

"W-welcome... p-please come in!"

Meltina's greeting came out in pieces, probably due to her being too nervous.

And the same could be said of Mikhail, who had insisted on being present on such an occasion.

Ryouma had allowed them to accompany him on the condition that they wouldn't get in his way.

Yet it seemed they were intent on doing just that, with their faces as red as if they were meeting their secret crush, and even trembling shoulders to boot.

It was like seeing how flustered girls became when they were around their first love.

(Well, since they're this nervous, I guess they won't say anything unnecessary, which is good...)

However, when he gave the whole situation a second thought, it was reasonable for them to be as nervous as they were.

After all, the person known as [Rozeria's White Goddess of War] - Elena Steiner - was a living hero of legend in their eyes.

A week ago, after Earl Zerev had informed him about her, Ryouma had decided to investigate Elena Steiner.

Surprisingly, he didn't need to put in much effort to gain information.

Since there wasn't a single citizen of the Kingdom of Rozeria that hadn't heard about her.

It had gotten to the point where even the children in town had heard the stories about her.

It reflected on how implicitly the citizens of the Kingdom trusted her.

There were a lot of tales of battles she heroically fought in.

And among those stories, the most legendary one was about The Battle of Notis.

The Notis Prairie is on the borderline between the Kingdom of Zalda and the Ortomean Empire.

Elena Steiner had been dispatched to the Zaldan Kingdom as a part of the Rozerian reinforcements, but instead of just saving the Zaldans, she had also deployed a reverse-invasion strategy against the Ortomean Empire, which had been gathering soldiers as part of their planned invasion of Zalda.

After successfully thwarting their plans, she was declared a National Hero.

"Fufufu... you don't have to be that tense. Please drink some tea and calm down."

"Y-yes! P-please excuse me!"

Although Elena tried to calm her down, Meltina instead became even stiffer.

“Well, it’s best to leave her alone for now, Elena-sama. And also, thank you very much for coming all the way here.”

Elena answered Ryouma with a gentle nod.

“I was very surprised when I received your letter. After all, I haven’t been a knight for almost ten years now”

“I can not thank you enough for listening to our unreasonable request, and I personally feel nothing but gratitude towards you.”

“Well, since it was written in Princess Lupis’ own handwriting, I had no other choice except to come and visit Her Highness.”

Saying so, she elegantly lifted the teacup to her lips.

“Hearing you say so definitely makes me think it was worthwhile for me to ask the Princess to write that letter.”

Upon hearing that, Elena became somewhat suspicious of Ryouma.

The reason for her suspicion was obvious. After all, Ryouma said that he had made the Princess write the letter for him.

“That reminds me, I have yet to ask what your name is.”

Due to his previous statement, Elena seemed to have taken an interest in Ryouma.

“I’m called Mikoshiba Ryouma.”

A surprised expression appeared on Elena’s face.

“Oh my... you really don’t have the presence of a tactician...”



Certainly, when looking at Ryouma's body, one could not see anything past his muscles. He did not look like someone who fought with his head.

"By any chance, have you heard of me?"

"Ara~, isn't it obvious? After all, even if I have retired from the army, I still love this country. I learn about most things that happen around here, you know? And some people did not forget me as easily even after I retired as Knight ten years ago. Hence, they talk with me about a lot of things."

Looking at Elena's face, Ryouma was convinced that she was still in contact with some of her knight friends.

(I see, she doesn't seem to be involved with the Knight faction yet, and... that could be a good thing for us.)

Currently, most knights do not hold any loyalty towards the princess and that is because General Hodram, their leader, has the ambition of going against the Royal family in the future.

Originally, the knights were soldiers who would swear their allegiance to the Kingdom and to the royal family, so that they could act as a balancing factor against the nobles and their militias.

Judging from Elena's statement, perhaps there might be a group of knights that were not satisfied with serving under General Hodram.

And they must be the ones who had become her source of information.

"Is that so? Well then, it's a great honor for me that [Rozeria's White Goddess of War] knows my name."

Elena's smile turned wry upon hearing Ryouma's words.

"My, oh my... you've heard of something as old as that, huh? That title of mine... I earned it a long time ago."

“You don’t seem to like it very much, Elena-sama.”

“It’s a relic of the past, after all... by the way, I’ve yet to hear the reason behind your invitation to meet.”

It seemed as if her nickname was a topic she did not want to talk about and thus she immediately changed the subject.

“Then, let’s get straight to the point. I want you to give Princess Lupis your support.”

Elena’s expression stiffened.

She hadn’t expected him to immediately cut to the chase like he had.

“Oh my... how straightforward of you...”

She smiled, but afterwards Elena was immediately lost in thought for a while.

“But well, I guess it makes it easier to understand... and I like it, you know? Your way of doing things, that is...”

Her gaze and tone of voice had somehow changed, as if she was trying to evaluate Ryouma.

“Thank you for your compliment. So, what’s your answer?”

“Oh my? No matter how old I am, I’m still a woman, you know? It is never a good idea to rush a lady.”

“Oh, please forgive my rudeness, milady. Surely, forcing such a hasty invitation upon you is impolite of me. However, we really do not have much time left.”

Ryouma instantly parried Elena’s chiding words.

“Well, unless you let me meet the princess, I can’t give you an answer right away, you know?”

“Oh? You want to meet the princess? To be honest, we don't have time for something

as meaningless as that, you know?”

“WHAAAA-T!”

The outrage in Elena, Meltina, and Mikhail’s voices was strong.

“Y-you bastard!”

Ryouma directed his cold gaze towards Meltina, who had begun to stand up from her chair in anger.

It was a gaze that anyone who met would understand without a second thought.

It was as if it he saying ‘I’ll murder you if you don’t shut that mouth of yours!’

Meltina immediately sunk back into her chair.

“I’m sorry for that... she’s really not used to this kind of thing, you see...”

After confirming that Meltina had once again sat down, Ryouma slightly lowered his head toward Elena in apology.

“That really surprised me... you’ve really got guts, don’t you? Even as a hero of the army, I’ve only seen a few people who had a backbone like yours.”

“Thank you for your kind words. After all, my life is on the line here.”

Hearing Ryouma’s words, Elena asked a question after straightening in her chair.

“So? Why do you think it’s useless for me to meet the princess?”

“Because, if you really wanted to help the princess, you would have come to the castle a long time ago.”

She is someone who has already been in retirement for ten years.

For Elena to come to the Princess’ aid would mean that she would have to return to active duty once more.

Under normal conditions, something like that would be impossible.

Furthermore, for her, things like money or fame were meaningless.

She had once held the position of General, thus she had no problem as far as wealth, and there's no greater fame and honor than being the hero that saved her own nation.

Even if Ryouma used loyalty toward the royal family as a reason to force her to his side, for Elena, something like that would bear no weight on her decision.

If she could be swayed with things as simple as these, then... she would already be serving either Princess Lupis or Princess Ladine.

The reason behind why she had not done so was that she was unable to judge which one was the legitimate ruler.

She couldn't just arbitrarily declare that Princess Ladine, who had Duke Gerhardt's support, was a fake because Ladine could truly be a child of the previous king.

And because of her loyalty to the royal family, she had been unable to move.

From Elena's standpoint, she could not grant her support to Princess Lupis, at least not in the current situation.

That is why it was meaningless for the two of them to even meet.

"That's right... if you can see things so clearly, then why call me here at all?"

"Because we want your support by whatever means necessary."

After hearing Ryouma out, Elena had a troubled look on her face.

"My, oh my? Are you implying that you would even use force?"

If neither money nor reason could tempt her, then the only option that was left was to use force.

Contempt flashed across Elena's face.

"Did I overestimate you? I thought that a capable person had joined Princess Lupis' side."

“No, no... I wouldn't do so rude of a thing, you know? Using force that is.”

“Then what did you mean?”

Ryouma went on to answer Elena after a small fit of laughter.

“Even if I can't tempt you with money or honor, you still came here because of the letter you received from the princess. That means that there's still some room for negotiation, right? Hence, you're going to request something else. Neither money nor honor and not even loyalty would tempt you. It is something personal.”

Ryouma's deduction immediately changed the atmosphere in the room.

His words had taken everyone by surprise.

“I see... indeed, you're a sharp and capable person.”

Praise came forth from Elena's mouth.

And by what she had said, one could see that Ryouma's reasoning was correct.

“Then can you tell me? What is it that I really want... based on your answer, I will decide whether I will help Princess Lupis or not.”

“Understood... and, to be honest, I have a hunch as to what your wish is.”

Upon hearing Ryouma out, Meltina and Mikhail gaped in surprise. However, Elena's expression did not falter at all.

“Of course, that much is obvious... if you couldn't do even that much, then you would be a complete disappointment.”

“Although I said I could guess, I have no concrete proof, thus I can't really put my notions out in the open.”

“Fuu~ ... I don't know if I should call you cautious or an outright coward...”

Elena's gaze pierced Ryouma.

If she saw any hesitation or fear in Ryouma's demeanor, she had decided she would never accept him.

Ryouma took in her gaze head on.

In order to prove his own value.

"Well, I guess that when you fight with wisdom, being cautious is necessary, right? Fine. Then, please give me some time to think it over. But foremost, please tell me your theory."

Elena could clearly see Ryouma's unwavering resolve in his gaze.

Then she decided to bet on it.

She decided to bet her own life on it...

(This child... is he the last piece of the puzzle that I've been looking for all this time? Finally, the thing that I've looked forward to for so long has finally shown up...)

Ten years had passed since she had retired from her knighthood.

However, she herself had had no intention of retiring.

She had been forced to retire.

By that man.

Hodram.

[Rozeria's White Goddess of War]?

Elena's lips distorted in disgust.

Indeed, she had once been called so.

That name had spread across the neighboring lands, not to mention within the Kingdom of Rozeria itself.

Everyone had praised her.

However, she had not felt it.

She had not felt the blade that had been aimed at her.

The more fame you gain, the more another person would envy you.

(If this youngster can correctly guess my wish, then... if he has the wisdom to do so, then, maybe I... maybe I can finally get my one true desire!)

Expectancy and anxiety were evident in Elena's gaze.

The expectation that she may be able to finally be granted her wish, and yet the anxiety that she might be betrayed.

Ryouma immediately saw through those conflicting emotions within Elena.

A look that implied she was expecting something from him.

And apprehension that he might betray her.

He immediately concentrated on all of the information he had acquired beforehand and the newly-gained knowledge from their current meeting.

(What she wants is revenge against the Knight faction... but how far does it go? Is it only limited to Hodram himself? Or is it toward the entire faction?)

She had retired ten years ago.

Yet she had retained her influence among the knights, which meant that she's been waiting for an opportunity to take her revenge, and that's why she had never gotten out of shape.

If she had retired from the knights by her own will, then she wouldn't have needed to practice every day.

Also, one shouldn't forget the look on her face when Ryouma had called her by her famed title -[Rozeria's White Goddess of War] .

Despite apparently disliking her own nickname, her hatred was not all-encompassing, since she was still interacting with some of the other knights.

(Well, I had already taken all of this account beforehand...)

Of course, he shouldn't neglect all of the reasons she had had for coming to this meeting.

But then again, in the end, it was solely thanks to the existence of her closely-kept wish that this negotiation was possible at all.

Although her demand could end up costing her dearly.

(Fuu~ ... I guess I have no other choice than to give her an answer, do I?)

Ryouma made up his mind.

Although what he had was just an inkling.

No matter how much he thought about it, there was nothing certain about it.

However, he was left with no other choice besides believing in the answer he had arrived at, based on the information he had gained beforehand.

"Your wish is to get revenge, is it not?"

Upon finally hearing Ryouma's answer, a mix of joy and surprise radiated from Elena's expression.

"Why would you think so?"

"I felt it the moment I saw you. They told me you had retired. Yet, you've never stopped training, not for one day, and you also get a lot of news from the knights. And this is despite the fact that you have been retired for over ten years... which means your retirement was not something you decided on your own. And immediately after you retired, General Hodram replaced you. And after having met and seen General Hodram up close, I can see that he's the type of person who thinks highly of himself. Please, pardon me, Elena-san... but you're a farmer's daughter, aren't you? Since you're not from a noble family and you weren't born into knighthood... based on his personality, it wouldn't be strange for him to do something underhanded in order to get rid of you."

"I see... so you were able to understand me to such an extent..."

Elena's grudge could be felt in that one simple sentence.

“My... my greatest wish is for that man, Hodram, I want his head on a pike, for that man is not just my enemy, but also the enemy of both my husband and daughter...”

Listening to Elena’s words, Ryouma realized that he had been right all along.

And thus, the hatred she had kept within her heart would...

Chapter 17

Wavering People ⑥

Day 137 after being summoned to another world.

Ten years ago, Elena Steiner was a general of Rozeria Kingdom.

From an unknown farmer to a knight, and eventually to a general.

Her ability and achievement pushed her to the highest position in the military.

People in the Rozeria Kingdom idolize her.

However, within the crowd stood a man who envies her.

Whenever there's light, there will always be a shadow.

And that person's name is Hodram Ahrenberg.

He's someone blessed with good physique.

He also possesses the military skills necessary to become a top knight.

And he's also from a prestigious family which has always produce great knights from generation to generation.

He was undoubtedly a perfect knight one could ever wish for.

Not to mention he also has high discipline.

For the sake of surpassing everyone, he never settles for being the second best.

He keeps aiming for higher positions even when he's already in the position of a captain, a position that many regarded as the finest role a knight could ever dream of.

The top position in the Rozeria Kingdom army is the general.

There are six chivalric orders in the Rozeria Kingdom. The first two are the royal

guards who serve directly under the King to ensure his safety within the palace and the Royal defence that acts as the King's private army. The other four orders, under the command of the General, work to protect and maintain the peace within the kingdom.

Although one needs to be appointed by the king to get the position, usually the predecessor General will recommend and nominate a successor to the king.

However, at the time when the previous General was about to retire, he asked for anyone who wishes to apply for the position to nominate themselves.

As a result, the one who was chosen as the successor was Elena.

Her ability and fame for being [Rozeria's white goddess of war] was the final deciding factor.

It even can be said that it was natural for her predecessor to nominate Elena.

However, Hodram did not give up.

His pride would not allow someone who was a former farmer to take the job.

Hodram then proceeded to make several moves behind the scene in an attempt to take Elena down.

From fabricating corruption to the point of considering an assassination.

However, she was able to prevail through all of that.

Her friends within the chivalric order also helped her.

Ultimately, his frustration exploded to the point that Hodram's fangs reached her family.

That day, when she finally returned home after two months away suppressing a group of rebellious nobles.

However, no one came out to welcome her even after she opened the door.

Despite being a former farmer, she's a general.

Her house is a medium size mansion, and there's also servants.

She also couldn't see the figure of her ten years old daughter who would usually jumps out to welcome her when she comes home.

Feeling that something is not right, she rushed over to the living room where her family often gather.

When she opened the door...

“I found my husband's head...”

At the time she opened the door, what reflected on Elena's eyes was her dead husband's head.

His expression was as if he had been tortured before his death.

At that time, Elena's brain halted immediately, unable to accept reality.

It was not until several days later she woke up in a bed of her colleague's house and came to her sense.

Being a general is not an easy task.

Even after she returned from the expedition, she could only relax at home for a brief moment.

And the next day, a mountain of works such as preparing report awaits her in the office.

Thus it was fortunate that her colleague visited her house since she did not show up on the next day.

When he found her, she was still sitting in the living room, holding her husband's head in her arms.

Her friend then took Elena to his house and returned to Elena's mansion.

“There was a letter. The letter said that her daughter is alive... and if she wants her back, the condition is for her to retire...”

She must have been holding an unbelievable rage within her.

After all, even Ryouma could feel the rage from her tone of voice alone.

“You see I... I made an effort to progress from a mere peasant to becoming a General...”

Being a knight is never an easy task. After all, it is a job that is usually done by a man..."

It was considered more of a typical problem rather than sex discrimination.

After all, in term of muscular strength, women are visibly lagging behind men.

As a matter of fact, Elena has seen it first hand of how competitive it is to be among a group of men.

However, she was still able to show her full ability by maximizing her femininity.

And that is the power of cooperation rather than a skill of an individual.

When a knight fight, he puts his pride on a one-on-one fight.

They would show disgust when they surround one person with multiple people.

Speaking of a Knight's pride, while it is not necessary a bad thing, the efficiency is poor.

That's why Elena proposed a cooperation between Knights.

The Knights who were initially against her proposal began to understand thanks to her personality and its practicality in actual combat.

And the outcome of her effort is...

"Do you understand, how it feels to throw away all of that?"

Ryouma shook his head.

Although he's able to imagine it...

Only people who have been been through the same situation as hers can truly understand it.

"However, for my daughter, even if it costs me my rank... if she can return home safely, then..."

Her daughter was born when she was 40 years old.

Elena who got married after the age of 30 had given up hope on having her own child.

Since the medical technology in this world is lagging behind present-day Japan, it was

hard to give birth at later age.

That's why Elena was very happy when she found out that she was pregnant.

Because she was finally able to understand the happiness of being a woman.

“Therefore, despite my friends’ objections, I retired from the order... I know it was a weak judgment; however, I don't see any choice other than that...”

“She did not come back to you huh...”

Elena nodded her head towards Ryouma's words.

“I was forced to keep this matter to myself. I can't afford to put my daughter's life at risk by displeasing those criminals any further. However, one month passed, two months... My daughter never came back even after one year... Meanwhile, Hodram got the position of general.”

Since the victim chose not to publicise the crime, it was natural for this matter to end up not spreading to the general populace.

However, Ryouma felt that something is not right.

“What's going on? I thought the general position is handed down by recommendation of the predecessor?”

“Normally, that is so... but because I left without appointing a successor, and in the case of the predecessor died in action... then in those cases, it will be decided by a vote among the captains of each chivalric orders.”

It seems like Elena was unable to do anything since she was worried about her daughter.

Under such circumstance, for Elena to recommend a successor has become impossible.

“Five years passed since I come home, waiting for my daughter... In my mind, I had given up... Even if I wanted to hunt down the criminal; I was unable to find out anything. There was not a single clue of my daughter's whereabouts... and living has become painful ever since.”

That is natural.

After all, for parents, a child is their treasure.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a child is their life.

“Do you remember? Five years ago, a slave trader got sentenced to death due to secret maneuvers?”

Elena directed her question towards Meltina.

“Eh!? Y-Yes!...”

Slave trading in itself is not illegal.

However, usually they only deal with prisoner of war or the family of criminals.

It is unforgivable no matter where, for example, to capture a fellow townsman and make them slaves deliberately.

Despite this being a feudal lord system, they, of course, won't recommend slave hunting.

If they were to do so, people would escape from their territory.

However, no matter what ages, there will always be foolish people.

Thinking they could get away with doing it in a small scale, they commit the crime.

And the slave trader who got beheaded five years ago was such merchant.

“You see, he was someone who would buy any kind of man as long he can make profits. No matter where they came from, even taking as far as the townsman of the royal capital.”

That slave trader was beheaded after attempting to deprive a noble's relative.

Who was also related to the royal family.

The slave trader's confidence seems to have come from how easy it is to bribe the officials in the kingdom. However, if you were to anger the ones with higher authority than those who back you up, your life will be over.

“And the one who was tasked to arrest that person is the chivalric order. In fact, because that person commanded a very large private army... The chivalric order needed the help of The Garrison guard to arrest him.”

“So, did you find out where your daughter is?”

“Indeed... there were a lot of rumors after the order tortured him.”

Elena's answer to Ryouma was quiet. However, the content was pretty gruesome.

“And then, during the torture, he admitted that he was the one who assassinated my family...”

It seems like he was the intermediate that gathered the assassins, but for Elena everything is the same.

“I was able to meet the man directly, because after all, the one in charge of the torture is a former subordinate of mine.”

To put it simply, she took the risk.

After all, even if she's a retired general, it has been five years since her retirement.

She was just an ordinary person back then, yet she took the risk to meet him.

“So... that's where you found out, right? That Hodram was the mastermind behind everything...”

“Yes.”

It was a short answer, but that answer tells him everything.

“Why did you waited this long?”

“It's simple... This story is not something that I can easily speak about... Had I spoken about it carelessly, I might get crushed, or he will send an assassin to aim for my life as well... Since I was retired, Hodram has significantly become more powerful. It is not possible to dislodge him out of his position with just a mere slave trader testimony...”

Silence loomed over the room.

No one expected it to be this complicated.

Ryouma is not sure what to say since Mikhail and Meltina may end up knowing too much about it as well.

“So that's how it is...”

Ryouma's mouth also feels heavy.

He had anticipated that to some degree; however, he did not expect that her grudge would run this deep.

(This is bad... If it's this bad then, should I just let Meltina handle the Knights afterward?)

“It's fine. I won't do anything that you're worried about... what I want is just Hodram and his family. Only that...”

Elena was able to understand Ryouma's anxiety from his complexion.

Therefore she spoke honestly about her wish.

(I see... She's able to understand my concern... Her ability and judgement are certainly not bad... I guess we can only prepare for the worse huh?...)

There's no change within Ryouma's mind that he wants Elena for the position.

After all, her ability has already been demonstrated.

It's just a matter of whether to protect Hodram's family from her revenge or not.

According to the law, such revenge is a crime.

And she should also understand that.

That's why she had waited this long.

Waited for an opportunity to come.

Elena had presented her conditions.

The problem now is whether Ryouma would accept it or not.

(I guess I have no choice huh?... Well, although it is regrettable, I have no choice other than to give up Hodram's family here.)

Ryouma disregards his sense of justice.

No matter how much he looks for it, there's no other choice.

Anyway, it is the family of his enemy to begin with.

Furthermore, this also can be said as something along the line 'you reap what you sow.'

Thus he does not feel sorry for the family involved.

(Well, I'm fine with it... But what about the princess?...)

Even if Ryouma pretended that he did not feel affected, the problem is the princess.

One month had already passed since their first meeting.

With that much time, he was able to grasp her personality thoroughly.

(She's someone who pursues ideal too much... Will she accept Elena's revenge toward Hodram's family? That's impossible... so what should I do? If I refuse here, she will definitely side with the noble faction...)

Her main goal is to revenge.

Of course, there's the case regarding loyalty to the royal family, but does that even matter now?

If someone from noble faction were to come to her earlier than Ryouma, and were willing to grant her wish, she would without a doubt join the nobles faction.

(I guess, I have no choice other than taking her on huh...)

Ryouma resigned.

He will accept Elena's condition without telling the princess.

“Fine by me... I accept your demand.”

““Wha!”“

A surprised voice leaked out from Meltina's and Mikhail's mouths.

In fact, this is also part of the negotiation.

Had he ask time to discuss it with the princess, Elena's heat will cool down during that time.

There's no other choice than to decide all of this here and now.

“Are you sure? Don't you need to discuss this matter with her highness first?”

Elena was able to see through what's inside Ryouma's head.

“Rest assured... Please entrust this matter to me. Although this might sounds arrogant... I will do something about it. Please don't worry...”

Listening to Ryouma's words, Elena gazes directly at Ryouma's eyes.

As if saying 'I won't forgive you if you lie.'

After she stared at him for a short while.

Elena's expression relaxed.

“Very well, I will believe in you, Mikoshiba-dono.”

As a proof of trust, Elena paid respect to Ryouma who is much younger than her.

“Thank you very much. Elena-sama.”

“So? What should I do? Should I break the knight faction?”

For a moment Ryouma was lost in thought upon hearing Elena's question.

“How many people within the Knight faction are feeling dissatisfied towards General Hodram?”

“Let see... Almost two-third of them have dissatisfaction toward him...”

“Two-third?!”

A surprised voice leaked from Ryouma's mouth.

Hodram cannot be the head of a faction if the majority hates him.

“That's impossible isn't it?”

Elena answers Ryouma's question with a smile.

“Certainly, normally something like that is impossible... But as you can see, he was able to do so. And he does that by using the so-called mutual surveillance.”

“Mutual surveillance is it?”

“Will it be easier to understand if I say, he is willing to offer promotion in exchange for secret information?”

There are several countries on Earth where such system is being adopted.

Most of the communist before the soviet union collapsed had adopted such system... while North Korea is still utilising this system to maintain their administration up until now.

To put it simply, it is a system that encourages betrayal.

If a subordinate reports a secret information to their boss regarding someone that their boss does not like.

In exchange, they will get promoted for the information.

Such system is very prone to creating human distrust.

Of course that is natural.

Every human being has someone they feel dissatisfied about.

And if someone heard another person's secret information, they might kill that someone just to hide it.

As a result of that, neither colleagues nor friends can open their heart to each other.

"I see... Certainly that might be easy to break..."

The weak point of this system is that it could collapse if just one person has the courage to stand up.

The problem is such courageous man is hard to come by.

It might sound weird to call such system strong despite being weak, but that was the truth.

Everyone has dissatisfaction, but they cannot talk to others.

In other words, they have to be ready to put their life on the line just to speak out.

That's why this system is strong.

However, when a person with courage comes and stand up, what will happen?

Of course, the person must pick the people to talk about his or her dissatisfaction, but that won't change the likelihood that they share the same discontent.

After talking about their mutual dissatisfaction, it will slowly overflow outside the barrier.

When that happen, nobody will be able to stop them anymore.

The dissatisfaction that has been kept down all the time will burst out in rage.

And then, they will pull the trigger on the man in front of them.

Not to mention the one who initiates the fire is Rozeria's hero herself.

The flame will be massive.

Although he doesn't know how far Meltina and Mikhail understand all of this, Ryouma was able to see the clear outcome from it.

“Very well. I will entrust that side to you. However... Please be sure to report the situation to me thoroughly.”

“You don't have to worry. Trust me for that part. Even though I look like this, I'm still a former general after all.”

“May I ask one other thing?”

“Oh my? Is there something wrong?”

Ryouma asked Elena when she tried to leave the room.

Even though he knew it is insensitive to ask this question, he couldn't leave it alone without asking.

“Your daughter...”

Elena did not answer Ryouma's words for a while.

Clearly it is a story that she does not want to talk about.

Here Ryouma regretted his thoughtlessness.

“Ah, Forgive me I forgot... 'my daughter you see, after being kidnapped... she had gone mad after getting herself thoroughly violated... since someone like that... have no value anymore... they killed her... '“ “...I'm sorry.”

Although he had expected it, hearing it directly from the victim's parent feels very heavy.

He was about to say she did not have to answer but...

(I guess I'm stupid... I ended up hearing something I should not have...)

“It's fine... I do not mind... However... This is why I can't stop... Never!”

Looking at her back who was going out of the room, was the figure of a person who stands above everyone else, and also a figure of a mother in pure anger.

Chapter 18

Outbreak of war ①

Day 165 after being summoned to another world.

“This is bad... we cannot use this plan anymore...”

Ryouma scratched his head while staring at the ceiling inside his own room.

Beside Ryouma, only Sara and Laura, both of whom are wearing chainmail underneath their maid outfit are present

However, both sisters did not talk to Ryouma.

Because right now, their duty is to not disturb their master.

In the first place, Ryouma's words did not require any answer either.

They were words that came out unintentionally while he's in deep thought.

Both sisters had understood that since they had been with him for more than five months now.

“Nee-sama... Ryouma-sama seems to be in deep thought... could he perhaps forgot that the banquet party will start soon?”

“Indeed... But you must not disturb him, alright?... he will immediately call out to us the moment he made up his mind... when the time comes you can just inform him that you’ve declined the invitation.”



「姉様……亮真様、

すごく考え込まれているけど……

晩餐会の開始時間が過ぎているのを

忘れてないよね？」

サーラが小さな声で傍らの姉へ耳打ちする。

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

ウォルテニア 戦記

The sisters have decided that he will be absent from the dinner party.

“Unn... understood... then I will go and decline their invitation.”

“Thank you... please do so... I don't want to leave Ryouma-sama unsupervised after all... please give her highness the princess my best regard as well.”

“Un... I understand, it would be dangerous if an assassin were to show up like the last time after all...”

“Indeed... Well, I think we should be fine since this is Ryouma-sama we are talking about... Ah right, go borrow the kitchen and prepare some evening meal for him. I'm sure he will be hungry when he's done.”

“Unn... Understood.”

After exchanging a few words, Sara left the room quietly.

Jet black darkness has already loomed over the sky outside.

Currently, it would be a great opportunity for assassins to come out since even the moonlight is covered by the clouds.

Of course, the security within the castle is regarded as impenetrable. However, the place is guarded by humans and therefore error is bound to happen at some point.

Furthermore, their priority is to protect Princess Lupis' safety.

It would be natural for them to treat the rest of the people as a second priority, even if they are the people who helped the Princess.

The other day Ryouma was attacked by assassins.

Ryouma, who noticed an arrow flying toward him, immediately bent his body to dodge it. Although the arrow missed, but because the arrow had poison on it, it could have been fatal.

Since the assassin's whereabouts is still unknown, they need to be cautious in case a second surprise attack happen.

Both Laura and Sara are ready to become Ryouma's shield.

However, since the sisters understand that Ryouma does not permit the sisters to

sacrifice their lives to save his, they armed themselves to be ready to respond to any danger...

One of the countermeasures is the chainmail they are wearing underneath their maid clothes.



“Fuu... I'm hungry... ”

Almost two hours had passed since the time Sara went out to inform the princess that Ryouma can't participate in the banquet.

“What time is it now?”

“It's currently 8.05 p.m.”

Laura immediately replied.

“Ah, I see... Wait! There's a dinner party today isn't it?”

“I've already declined it on your behalf.”

“I see... thanks, you're a lifesaver.”

Originally, Ryouma was supposed to dine with Princess Lupis tonight.

But a report that arrived in the morning had changed everything.

That report sent Ryouma lost in thought. He had to think about the countermeasures.

“Is there any message from them?”

“We were told that since Ryouma-sama might be busy thinking about a plan, Ryouma-sama does not have to be worried about being absent. However, there will be another meeting tomorrow, and they want Ryouma-sama to present the plan at that time.”

Princess Lupis was surprisingly favorable towards Ryouma, despite his refusal to her invitation which is usually an act of serious offence.

This, in turn, reflected how important the report they received this morning was.

Hearing Laura's words, Ryouma feels relieved.

"I see... phew, tomorrow huh..."

Growl

Sound came out of Ryouma's stomach.

Other than drinking tea, he has not eaten anything since Lunch. As expected, Ryouma was starving.

"I'm hungry... Is there anything to eat?"

"Yes, Sara had already prepared some food."

"Is that so? Then let's eat together. You guys have not eaten either right?"

Ryouma knew that the girls wouldn't eat before him. Hearing his words, Laura nodded her head happily.

"We'll prepare it immediately."

"Now then. Because there's not much time, let's go over the plan while we eat."

Both sisters turned their gazes towards Ryouma and nodded their head.

For Ryouma, both sisters have become his maid, his guard, and also his important adviser.

By explaining his thoughts to the sisters, Ryouma can sort out his train of thoughts clearly, and at the same time, it also functions as a rehearsal before he has to explain it to Princess Lupis.

Particularly, choosing the right words to convey the meaning and expression across is important.

Since both sisters are from a Knight family, by this world standard, they had received

the best education.

From Ryouma's perspective, their knowledge is more or less only equal to upper grades of primary school. However, since it was a knowledge obtained during the period of chaos like this, it was something they can be proud of.

In fact, most of the commoners, who accounted for over 90% of the total population are unable to write their own names.

Let alone mathematics.

With the exception of merchants, most common people can't even do simple additions.

Because of that, Ryouma words can often be misunderstood by others.

Even when he was explaining a general concept, they were not able to grasp the essence of his ideas.

That's why Ryouma explains it to the sisters first.

By observing their reactions, he is able to identify which words are not suitable to use.

Afterward, he can rephrase his sentences or explain it in more detail.

“Are you two aware that General Hodram has joined the noble faction?”

The sisters nodded their head.

Originally it was a piece of information that was only known to a small number of people. However, this sort of information will eventually be leaked.

This bad news that arrived in the morning is no longer a secret to the people in the castle.

Although Ryouma is disappointed that a national secret leaks so easily like this, he felt it can't be helped since the level of crisis management in this world is quite poor.

Even if Mikoshiba Ryouma is someone who had been summoned from another world.

It is impossible for him to change the way a country does things in a single night.

There's no choice other than for him but to prioritise the problems in front of him and rectify them in order.

That being said, the only things that got leaked was that General Hodram has joined the noble faction.

How he ended up siding with the noble faction remains a mystery.

“I see... First, should I start by explaining how it ended up like this? “

Ryouma began to talk while munching down a piece of steak and followed by some wine.

It was around four days ago when General Hodram had left the royal capital, bringing with him the ‘white sword chivalric order’ in the name of restoring order.

Ryouma was not aware of this

He heard that General Hodram had a direct talk with Princess Lupis.

In reality, ever since the nobles faction started supporting Princess Ladine, the Kingdom’s security has deteriorated.

To maintain peace, one needs power; and to maintain that power, one needs strength.

Justice without power will never prevail.

Nevertheless, the royal capital Pireaus is one of the big regional cities. The nobles faction and princess' faction stationed their soldiers in such city because of its strategic value. As a result, the security of Pireaus is the strongest compared to all the nearby cities.

Consequently, this leads to less soldiers guarding the smaller towns and villages since it has less strategic advantage.

Of course, something like this is inevitable.

Because neither Princess Lupis nor Duke Gerhardt have an infinite military power.

Ryouma is also concerned about the security, but there's nothing he can do.

And General Hodram took advantage of that flaw.

“The kingdom cannot live without its people!”

With that line alone, it would be hard for Princess Lupis to ignore the argument.

If Ryouma or Elena were to hear these words from general Hodram, they won't be able to believe in it.

Indeed it is a just argument.

But, is it possible that someone who has always seek benefits for himself to suddenly care about the people?

The answer is a big no.

Of course, nothing in this world is 100% certain.

However, it was clear enough that this was fabricated.

Had Ryouma or Elena were on the scene, they would never have believed such story.

At least, they wouldn't have let General Hodram command the army directly.

However, Princess Lupis did not realize this.

No, She might have realized it.

However, she succumbed to the sweet talk about justice that General Hodram had presented.

Because her wish is also for the peace of the kingdom.

And as a result for that, she accepted General Hodram's suggestions.

Sure enough, Princess Lupis ended up getting deceived.

"That's how it is..."

The expressions of the two sisters who heard the story from Ryouma did not change.

If he was to talk to Lione's group, they would definitely talk back with abusive language; however, these girls wouldn't do that.

Because they understand having spent time with Ryouma that it is pointless to get angry and nothing will be accomplished by just complaining alone.

“Is that how it is?... and now Ryouma-sama is concerned due to the fact that General Hodram has joined the nobles faction is it?”

Laura turned her curious eyes towards Ryouma.

“Does Sara know what I have in mind?”

Ryouma instead asked Sara in return.

“Ryouma-sama, are you suspecting that this betrayal is the work of a third party?”

That's correct, this is what Ryouma is currently worried about.

Him appointing Elena is the right judgment.

However, having Elena on his side is like obtaining a powerful drug.

And if one were to drink too much medicine, it would become poisonous instead.

Like so, Ryouma ended up mishandling the powerful drug that is Elena.

She certainly is showing great work.

Together with her friends she kept in contact, they almost single-handedly took out the Knight faction in a single stroke.

The dissatisfaction within the Knight faction she told Ryouma about is true.

Half of the Knights have joined under Elena in just half a month.

From the start, there was already a large number of knights who had dissatisfaction toward Hodram within the Knight faction.

And when those dissatisfied Knight found out that Elena have come back, they started to join Elena one after another.

And as the days went by, that numbers increased drastically.

It was to the point that only 2500 Knights that work under General Hodram's direct

command remained loyal to him.

Hodram, who had his faction taken over was very surprised. However, Ryouma was just as surprised.

Originally, the plan was to eliminate Hodram after they had defeated the nobles faction.

However, it was impossible for Hodram who had lost control over his faction to keep supporting Princess Lupis quietly.

Thus Ryouma was planning to eliminate Hodram before he does something.

It was only a week ago that he solidified that plan.

“That's right; it's just too unnatural... I'm very sure that I've cornered Hodram... and now he needs some backing. I can understand that everyone wants reinforcement right now, but will Duke Gerhardt readily accepts him like this? Plus, I can't imagine that someone like Hodram would lower his head to his political rival either...”

Ryouma could never forget the eyes General Hodram had when the pair met for the first time during the audience.

His eyes were filled with greed and ambition.

“You damned peasant!” His eyes were practically screaming.

He's the type of person who's arrogant and would discriminate others, and those kind of people are usually merciless against their enemies as well.

He is one prideful man.

And most importantly, his relationship with Duke Gerhardt is very bad.

Even if he was being cornered, there's no way for him to lower his head first.

That's why Ryouma could never have anticipated that General Hodram would join the nobles faction.

“That might be true... but there's also the possibility that Duke Gerhardt is the one who approaches him first, no?”

“It's difficult to think otherwise indeed. However, who was the one that gave Duke Gerhardt that suggestion? “

Since the possibility of General Hodram lowering his head first is low, the only other explanation is that the nobles faction is the one who approached him first.

Certainly, if it was the nobles who are experts when it comes to political strategy, this would be possible.,

However, the discussion between the two sides with conflicting interests is usually time consuming.

And if the nobles faction have that much of leeway, then Duke Gerhardt would not have to pursue the matter of Princess Ladine's succession.

Because he could just slowly bring Princess Lupis to the nobles faction side.

“I see... Then, there's the possibility of intervention from the neighbouring countries, correct?” [Laura]

“That's right... That is what I feared the most... though, hopefully it stays as an imaginary fear.”

Ryouma nodded while answering Laura's question.

The Kingdom of Zalda that Elena had helped as reinforcement in the past is currently not on good terms with Rozeria kingdom due to the trade tariff issues.

And the relation with the Mist Kingdom is not exactly on good term either.

Despite in the past, the three-nation have cooperated against Ortomea Empire,their relation right now is not exactly good either.

In fact, relations like this can be viewed as bad.

Since they will not hesitate to bear their fangs at one another if you leave even a slight opening.

“And I have no information regarding the foreign nations either...”

Currently, Ryouma is unsure whether it is limited to this country alone, or if the entire world is like this, but he thinks the information network is shockingly awful.

There's no way for them to acquire solid information on the other countries.

The only way to obtain any information is only from the mercenaries or merchants that passes by the nation.

However, the information from them can be inaccurate.

Moreover, most of the information were not useful for the nation.

After all, gathering information is not one of their work priorities.

The sisters now have understood Ryouma's worries.

They know how valuable information and preparing ahead is for Ryouma, after spending time with him.

However, at the same time, the sisters know acknowledged that Ryouma's concerns cannot be resolved by their powers alone.

Because the privileged class in this world does not understand the importance of information.

If Ryouma wants it, there is no other way but to hire a person to investigate.

But right now he has no time to do that.

"Ryouma-sama... there's no use worrying about what can't be done... for now, we should focus on how we can defeat General Hodram and Duke Gerhardt before the neighboring countries make their moves, no?"

Ryouma could do nothing other than nodding his head in agreement with Laura.

After all, by the end of the days, he has no other choice.

"Duke Gerhardt has about 60.000 men, combined with General Hodram's 2.500 knights and the mercenaries he hired; they will end up with around 65.000 people. On our side, there are 12.500 knights, and the soldiers that Earl Bergston and other nobles have gathered are around 20.000 men. In total, we have 32.500 people. With those numbers alone, we're in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous situation..."

Ryouma nodded toward Sara's statement.

“Since most of the noble faction members are middle or upper ranked nobles, their territories are huge. Hence, the number of people they can recruit as soldiers is large. If we compare the numbers alone, we cannot dream of defeating the nobles faction.”

“However, that much is a given. That being said, in terms of fighting power, we're nearly equal.”

All the knights can use magic arts.

Although there's a difference of how much each individual is capable of using it,

At least everyone is capable of enhancing their own physical strength.

In terms of fighting power, that makes a big difference.

“Well... Ultimately, other than the fact that General Hodram switched over to the enemy's, nothing has actually changed.”

“I agree... Although we should not mind too much about something out of our reach, it would be bad if we were to ignore it completely.”

Laura's words summed up the current situation accurately.

The scariest thing for them is for the neighboring nation to suddenly invade before they finished dealing with Hodram and Gerhardt.

Although there's no conclusive evidence for that to happen, they still cannot ignore the possibility.

“If that is the case then, we must put an end to all of this quickly...”

Ryouma turned his gaze towards the ceiling.

「亮真様……
そろそろ刻限です」

耳元を擦るサーラの甘い囁きが、
読書に夢中の亮真を現実へと引き戻す。



Chapter 19

Outbreak of War ②

Day 166 after being summoned to another world.

“What? So you want us to advance to Irachion!?”

Meltina's high pitch voice echoed throughout the meeting room.

The emergency meeting had begun since dawn.

“Why so suddenly? Didn't you say that we should wait until the enemy to approach Pireaus to begin the decisive battle?”

Mikhail added his own question.

And such question is understandable.

In between the royal capital Pireaus and the Duke Gerhardt stronghold Irachion, there are two rough place known as Eleksha forest and Thaves river.

The Eleksha forest is a vast woodland area, with a single road cutting through the the forest.

There would be no problem for ordinary merchants or travelers to pass by. However, for an army this would be far too narrow to commute.

While it is not impossible for them to use this route, their formation would be narrowed, and not to mention that their speed would also decrease. Furthermore, the thick wooded area around them would be a perfect place for setting up an ambush.

After passing through Eleksha forest, the Thaves river will be visible.

This river is originated from mount Oul, which is located at the border of Zalda Kingdom. The river runs from northeast to Southwest of Rozeria Kingdom.

Thanks to this river, Rozeria Kingdom can live as an agricultural nation. However, from

the perspective of moving soldiers, this river can only be seen as a hindrance.

The river itself has 500m width, meaning it would be impossible for them to build a bridge.

Additionally, the depth of water is quite deep, which would make it impossible for soldiers to walk across it.

Naturally, they would need a ship to cross the river.

On both sides of the river, there are several ferries that provides transportation services.

Although there'd be no problem for ordinary people to cross it, the story would be different when it comes to maneuvering a large army.

First of all, despite calling it a ship, it was not something that can be used to transport 100 people at once.

Even the largest ship there would be full with just 20 people.

Not to mention that a range of supplies need to be transported as well.

From spears and harness replacement.

To provision and horses.

As well as medicines for the injured.

And the list goes on and on.

Each and every one of those items are essential and must be carried over to the other side...

It is painfully obvious that this will take far too much time to complete.

The only way for the entire army to cross the river is to make round trips with a handful of soldiers at a time.

And that could be problematic.

Because something like that might become the cause of defeat.

Incidentally, in the past Rozeria Kingdom had waged war against Mist Kingdom through Irachion.

However, the situation right now is completely different.

At the time when they wage war against Mist Kingdom, the battleground was on the border between the two nations.

It was a situation where the safety of Irachion was guaranteed; thus there was no problem when they crossed over the river.

However, right now the enemy is Duke Gerhardt.

The east side of the Thaves river is completely under Duke Gerhardt's control.

It is not a situation where they can cross over the river without any trouble.

That is why previously Ryouma had suggested performing the decisive battle by luring the enemy toward the royal capital Pireaus.

Draw the enemy toward their own territory and then cut off their supply line.

That was what Ryouma had planned.

And that was also the reason why all of the people who are present in the meeting raised their voice of surprises when Ryouma suggested a change of plan.

The only people who did not change their expressions are the Marfisto sisters.

"I see... as expected of Ryouma, you have a clear understanding of the psychology of our enemy huh."

Though she was initially surprised with what Ryouma had suddenly suggested, she also understands what Ryouma is aiming for.

And that person is Elena.

"What does that mean?"

"It means, it would be easier for us to attack their territory now, Your Highness."

——すごい自信ね。貴方。

あなた

ルピス・
ローゼリアヌス

ローゼリア王国の近衛騎士団騎士団長。
父である国王の後継者だが、政争に巻き込まれる。

メルティナ・
レクター

ローゼリア王国の家臣で
ルピス王女の側近。

俺が殿下に勝利を
もたらすからですよ。

みこしばりょうま
御子柴亮真

異世界オルトメア帝国に召喚された高校生。
持ち前の戦才を活かし、異世界で覇王を目指す

Ryouma answered Princess Lupis' question, but she remained doubtful.

That is because he did not explain the reason why it would be easier for them to attack their enemies' territory now.

Ryouma then proceeded to explain to everyone who attended the meeting carefully.

"At first, I had suggested to lure the enemies to our territory because it was difficult for us to attack their territory."

Because both parties were worried about the possibility of getting attacked during the time they cross the river and forest, both Princess Lupis and Duke Gerhardt were waiting for their opponent to cross to their own territory... however, there is no need to worry about those issues right now.

At least for the next 2 - 3 days.

As for the reason?

It is because General Hodram has joined Duke Gerhardt.

"I've never considered General Hodram joining forces with Duke Gerhardt as a problem. Rather, I thought of it as a mistake made by the enemy."

In the first place, this war was started because of their struggle for power.

Both the Duke and the General are prideful and arrogant beings.

And both of them are not the type who would compromise with their opponent.

"Now I ask you people, who do you think among those two will become the commander of their army when they ended up joining forces?"

Command structure is a vital part in war.

No matter how much troops you have, victory cannot be achieved without a systematic and efficient command structure.

This was evident in Earth's history.

<TLN: An easy comparison would be German Nazi, their command structure is so inefficient that it

surprises a lot of people after the war ends, one of the many reasons that lead to their defeat in war>

It might be easier if we compare it to a business company

For example, when a section chief and the director's direction conflicted with each other, which one would you give priority?

The answer would be the director's orders since the director is superior in rank.

Then how about when the president and the director order conflicted with each other?

You would give priority to the president, right?

Then what would happen if there are two presidents?

Both are your bosses.

What would happen if the two of them give out a conflicting order to you?

Everyone would end up confused.

That is because you wouldn't be able to decide which order you should follow.

This applies to the current situation.

Hypothetically speaking, if Duke Gerhardt were to hand the authority of commanding his soldiers to General Holdram who has more experience in the military, or if General Holdram were to follow Duke Gerhardt's orders since he has more soldiers, then this could spell a disaster for Ryouma.

But they are people with simple nature, narrow-minded mind, and overflowing arrogance.

Precisely because Ryouma understood that, he thinks now is the best time to attack.

"...I see, so that's how it is..."

Listening to Ryouma's explanation, the Princess' face no longer has any doubtful expression.

The surrounding people seem to be able to understand what Ryouma had said as well.

"But this won't last forever, no?"

Earl Bergston casted his doubt.

Indeed their opponents are arrogant and narrow-minded people.

However, they are among this nation's best people.

They are not completely stupid.

"That's why I said 2 - 3 days."

Because they had just joined forces, there would be a small opening.

The moment they finished their agreement, that opportunity would disappear.

"But Mikoshiba-dono... no matter how fast we dispatch our soldiers, it would take us around seven days to reach the Thaves River alone. Won't that be too late then?"

Earl Zerev pointed out a logical question.

It would be pointless if they are unable to catch the opportunity they had aimed for.

But Ryouma is already aware of that and came up with the countermeasures.

"It would certainly be impossible if we were to move the whole army. However, as a small number, let's say, 2000 cavalry unit and mercenaries should be able to make it."

The reason why Earl Zerev said it would take seven days is because he had also included the foot soldiers.

If we let the magic art users ride on horses and ignore the rest time by using recovery magic, we can cut a considerable amount of time.

And of course, because there are no foot soldiers, the marching speed would be faster.

"But... let us assume that you've managed to cross over Thaves River with the 2000 troops, what are you going to do next? The enemy has more than 60.000 soldiers you know? Won't 2000 soldiers end up useless?"

Meltina is worried regarding the time after he had crossed the river.

Certainly, 2000 cavalry would be able to reach the Thaves River within three days.

However, after he crossed the river, he will have to face the enemy's soldiers immediately.

She could only see this as a suicidal action.

"I've already thought about that. Of course, it would be impossible to wage war against 60.000 men with only 2.000 men. But remember, it'd require around seven days for the whole army to arrive at the Thaves River if they are dispatched right after the cavalry marches, right? I think 2000 soldiers can hold on for a few days."

Everyone who heard Ryouma tilted their head.

Ryouma seems to be confident despite the enemy being 30 times stronger in numbers.

The people within the meeting room cannot agree on that so easily.

"You have some sort of plan?"

Ryouma nodded his head toward Princess Lupis' question.

He does not believe that they can win if they were to fight head to head.

But at the same time, he also thought that they should not give up on this opportunity either.

If they miss this opportunity here, a cooperative relationship could be established between Duke Gerhardt and General Hodram.

Even if it sounds unreasonable, this is definitely a good time for them to attack.

Silence ruled over the meeting room.

All the gazes of the people within the meeting room are directed at Princess Lupis.

Because her decision will decide everything.

(Could he really achieve the impossible? No... rather, will those 2000 soldiers be able

to defend against 60.000 soldiers?)

Princess Lupis ponders about Ryouma's suggestion.

She understands that her decision will determine the country's future.

At last, it was Elena who broke the long silence.

“I think we should go along with his plan... the situation won't improve if we just stand idly like this either. And I also agree that this is a good time for us to make our move.”

“Elena... I understand. I will leave 2000 soldiers under your command as an advance group. Defend yourselves until the main force arrives by all means!”

After listening to Elena's advice, Princess Lupis finally made her decision.

“Understood. Please leave it to me.”

Hearing those words, Ryouma lowered his head.



“Geez! You really have some nerve, boy... to think you would tell us to cross the dangerous bridge deliberately.”



Having said that, a smile appears on Lione's face.

There was no malice in her words.

After Princess Lupis had decided the advance party, Ryouma, Lione and Bolts gathered in a room.

Although Mikhail and the Marfisto sisters are not with them right now, they also part of the advance party.

"Well, it's better to attack them rather than getting attacked after all."

"Elena-sama also had said it, but indeed, this is a good time for us to attack."

Listening to Ryouma's words, Bolts responded to him in agreement.

For people who have a lot of experience like him, they would be able to follow Ryouma's way of thinking.

"But still, young master, how are we going to defend against 60.000 soldiers with only 2.000 troops?"

Bolt asked modestly.

Although holding utmost respect towards Ryouma, Bolt has no intention of following anyone blindly.

It is normal for him to question the sanity of the idea behind fighting 60.000 soldiers with only 2.000 soldiers.

It is completely sensible for someone to want to know how to achieve all of that.

"Well, all of this will depends on Bolts-san and the other's ability. I've requested several tasks to the two of you, and well, it would depend on the results of those."

"Eh!? That?... Indeed that thing is amazing... but are you sure that it can help us defend against 60.000?" Bolt uttered those words in astonishment.

"Oh, rest assured, after all, we had practiced as the boy had ordered!"

Bolts showed a complicated expression while Lione showed a relaxed expression.

“The newly hired people are also keeping up fine right?”

“Yes. Everyone was confused at the beginning, but since I have properly trained them, everything should be fine! “

Lione puffed her chest with pride toward Ryouma's question.

Ryouma's order can be viewed as strange for the mercenaries in this world, but Lione was able to fulfill them properly.

“If that's true then good work, Lione-san.”

After hearing Ryouma and Lione's discussion, a smile returned to Bolts' face.

“Furthermore, I've asked Laura and her sister to do something as well.”

“Hmm? What is that?”

“Well, you will know when we fight the defensive battle.”

Hearing Ryouma's words, Lione looked around.

“Fhun... now that you mentioned it, they are not here? “

“Yes. It would be bad if the formation is not right after all.”

“I see. Well, I will bet my trust on you, boy. Make sure you don't disappoint me~.”

Lione's tone of voice sounded like she was joking, but her eyes were dead serious.

Despite being a small group, being a leader, she takes utmost pride in looking out for the safety of her members...

“Well, I guarantee you won't be disappointed.”

Ryouma shrugged his shoulders and answered her.

Ryouma is a man, not a god. There is no way for him to be able to say that he'd definitely win. Thus, he can only do his best.

"Alright, let's move out!"

""Depart!""

Following Ryouma's words, the squad leaders advance their troops.

On Ryouma's sides, the Marfisto sisters rode their horses in parallel.

"Ryouma-sama. We've arranged the direction as instructed."

"Good work."

Toward Laura's report, Ryouma nodded his head.

"Also, about the other instruction that Ryouma-sama gave me, I've found them."

Listening to Sara's report, Ryouma narrowed his eyes.

"Is it among the mercenaries?"

"That's right. I found it among the newcomer mercenaries that we have hired."

"I see... Keep your eyes open, alright?"

"Yes. I will do my best."

"Do you know how many of them?"

Sara shook her head toward Ryouma's question.

"I see... well, it's fine. Leave it be for now. Eventually, I will be able to make use of it."

"Understood."

After nodding her head, Sara advanced her horse toward the mercenaries group.

“Ryouma-sama. Shouldn’t we deal with the earlier matter first?”

“No... the more cards you have on your hands, the better. Besides, even if we were to get rid of it right away, there would be another one coming up.”

In response to Laura's question, Ryouma's eyes become narrow and sharp.

Just like a hawk looking at its prey.



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